Big Night Party Menu DRESS IT UP OR DRESS IT DOWN fine WE BRING OUT THE COOK IN 52 Classic Holiday Recipes STANDING RIB ROAST Party cakes, cookies & fudge **CHRISTMAS GOOSE** Homemade buttermilk pancakes DEC 09/JAN 10 · No.102 www.finecooking.com Hot chocolate layer cake with homemade marshmallows, page 86



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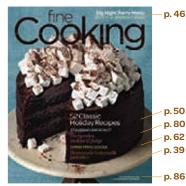
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and photographs on this page by Scott Phillips; illustration by Olaf Hajek

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Wishing on a bird



THE DISHES ARE ALMOST DONE, minus the good wine glasses, which nobody wants to wash until tomorrow morning. We have been cooking for days, the meals running into each other, the favored pots never getting put away. The cooks and the dishwashers (usually, my husband, mother, three kids, and me), happy, full, and exhausted, collapse.

Now, with Christmas behind us, we can start talking about what to cook next year—and the debate always kicks off with roasted goose.

Christmas dinner is one of my favorite meals. It's a wonderful excuse to go all out (things we rarely have—a small jar of caviar, some homemade duck confit, a gift of pâté, and some beautiful prosciutto—fill the fridge), and it comes with the promise of culinary adventure. Unlike Thanksgiving, where the cook has only so many choices, Christmas might be a glorious ham, a crown roast of pork, a standing rib roast, or goose, which we have yet to convince the rest of the family to let us make. This may be the year, now that I have Molly Stevens's recipe for indulgent roasted goose with its rich brandied prune stuffing and Cabernet gravy (page 62).

This issue is a celebration of the season's many classic foods, from chestnuts (we teach you how to roast them at home and make a silky chestnut soup, page 17) to cookies (readers share some of their favorites on page 92), tamales (a holiday tradition in Latin American homes, and a fine excuse for a party, page 72) to potato pancakes (our inspired version includes parsnips and scallions, page 69). It's also got three truly spectacular cakes, a parsnip pie that tops any pumpkin contender I've ever tried, and a foolproof recipe for fudge (gift idea).

Stop! I hear myself saying. Too many choices. Stay focused on the goose, because *this* is the year.

May you, too, get your goose.



Laurie Buckle, editor fc@taunton.com



Special Issues

We have three perfect-for-the-holidays special issues of *Fine Cooking* on newsstands now and in the coming weeks. (To order, go to FineCooking.com.)

SWEETCAKES

Our special holiday baking guide, SweetCakes, features more than 75 recipes for cakes of all kinds, from clever little cupcakes to big, gorgeous celebration cakes. Learn the right way to frost a cake and the secrets to a perfect pound cake, among other tips.

PARTIES

This is the only party planner you'll need for the holiday season, with mixand-match menus for Thanksgiving, Christmas breakfast, Hanukkah, New Year's Eve, and more. Also included: The Ultimate Cocktail Party.

APPETIZERS

From fancy first courses that make a great impression (deviled quail eggs, anyone?) to classics like baked Brie, artichoke dip, and spicy chicken fingers with blue cheese dip, there's a delicious idea here for every party—with more than 75 recipes to choose from.

New on DVD THE FINE COOKING

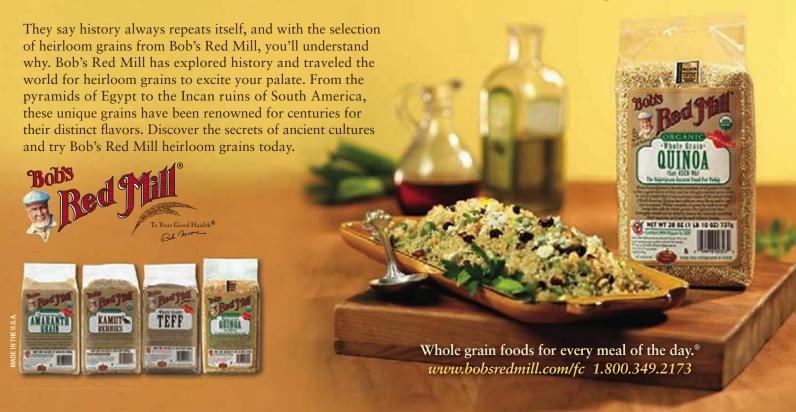
On sale November 24, this DVD includes all 102 issues of *Fine Cooking*—that's every issue from the beginning. It's available exclusively at FineCooking .com. (For readers who bought last year's version, an update is available.)

MAGAZINE ARCHIVE 1994-2009





Discover a New World with Heirloom Grains



THE WINNER

Rolling pin ruler

Many recipes call for rolling out dough to certain dimensions. To make this easier, I took my wooden 18-inch rolling pin and marked off the center, then various increments of inches. This means I don't need any other instrument to make the perfect size crust or pastry sheet. -Nancy Broderick, via email.

We want to hear from you. Give us your best tip and we'll reward you with a kitchen prize. Nancy is the winner of the Nordic Ware Anniversary Bundt pan, a 6-cup Bundt pan, and a popover pan.

CALL OR WRITE: Fine Cooking, The Taunton Press, 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Tel: 203-426-8171. Send an email: fc@taunton.com.



Thanksgiving kudos

I made the pear pie on the cover of the October/November issue and was amazed at how well it turned out and how seriously delicious it was. The crust was flaky, and the step-by-step photos and directions made it really easy. The juicy fruit filling and crunchy streusel topping was such a good combination. I will definitely make this dessert again and again. -Adele on CooksTalk

The October/November issue is one of your best. In particular, I really liked the modern makeovers of Thanksgiving classics. You nailed a solution for the classic holiday dilemma: how to make what everyone wants, while still letting us cooking fanatics create something new and interesting.

-Sid Landolt, via email

Enough about cooking with Julie and Julia-I can't wait to cook every recipe from the October/November issue of Fine Cooking. My dilemma is deciding which recipe to make first. Thank you for continuing to impress those of us who love to cook.

-Carol Barndollar, Houston, Texas

Wining and dining

I was disappointed in "The Wine Life" article in your October/November issue. One of my biggest complaints about entertaining stories in other magazines is that they're all about parties thrown by the beautiful and wealthy, and I don't really enjoy reading them. I can see why you ran the article about Paul Speck and his winery, but I hope this isn't a trend that continues in Fine Cooking.

-Andie Reid, Wilmington, North Carolina

I loved the vineyard story in your latest issue. I've always wondered what it would be like to live in the world of winemaking, and the photos in your story really took me there. I can't wait to order the cheeses you pictured and sit down with a glass of wine.

-Meagan Warncke, Leander, Texas

Veggies, please

I love your magazine, but I'd like to see more vegetarian options—a Fine Cooking special issue on vegetarian recipes would be most welcome. I know most of your readers must be carnivores, so I understand this might not be feasible, but it would certainly be a welcome addition to my cookbook shelves.

—Sheila Hill, via email

Soup's on

I enjoyed the story on French onion soup in your October/November issue. Since the weather is starting to cool off, I thought I might make it. I'd like to buy the bowls you pictured but can't find them. Can you help?

-Ken Toms, via email

Editors' reply: Sure, they're Pillivuyt's 15-ounce onion soup bowls, available at 125west.com for \$25 each.

Seasonal shellfish

I know I'm a little late in writing, but I wanted to comment on your article on grilled shellfish (August/September 2009). I am a marine scientist and understand that while it's perfectly safe to eat oysters sold in markets in the summer, that isn't their best season. Most of the oysters available in the summer have been imported from the southern hemisphere and shipped thousands of miles to meet the demand. In the future, I would love to see an article about choosing and cooking sustainably harvested shellfish. Educating readers about country of origin labeling and seasonality would go a long way toward helping consumers make informed choices about their seafood purchases.

—Tara Duffy, Stony Brook, New York

CSA 411

I just bought your Big Buy special issue. The editor's letter mentions her "CSA membership." When you're using unfamiliar acronyms, it would be helpful to identify what they mean. Not everyone has access to a computer to look them up.

—Pamela Beach, Dearborn, Michigan

Editors' reply: You're absolutely right. CSA stands for "community-supported agriculture." Here's how it works: Farms offer subscriptions that allow buyers to pay a set fee months before the growing season, and then receive a weekly or monthly basket of produce, fruits, eggs, or other farm products. Joining a CSA is a great way to get fresh local produce, but don't dawdle: Many farms sell out of their subscriptions early in the season, so now is a good time to inquire about signing up. To find a CSA near you, go to localharvest.org.

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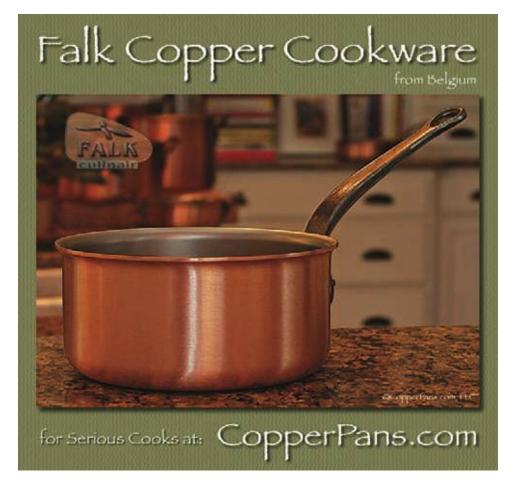
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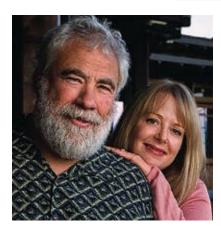
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TWO OF A KIND



Nancy Oakes ("Dressed Up," page 46) is the chef and co-owner of Boulevard restaurant in San Francisco and coauthor of Boulevard: The Cookbook. She lives in the San Francisco Bay

area with her husband, Bruce Aidells ("Dressed Down," page 47), who is a chef, cookbook author, and frequent guest on TV and radio cooking shows. He has written more than 10 cookbooks, several of which have been nominated for awards.

- The strangest thing I've ever eaten is... Nancy: coagulated goose blood. Bruce: sheep eveballs.
- The dish I most want to master is... Nancy: the perfect piecrust. It's a neverending quest.

Bruce: a whole roasted foie gras. It's verv tricky.

• What do you consider the most overrated ingredient? Nancy: Truffle oil. I hate it. Bruce: Truffle oil. It's like a caricature

of a truffle.



A. Richard Allen's ("Food for Thought," page 118) illustrations have appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Guardian, among other

international publications. He lives in Bournemouth, England, and has won two gold medals from the United Kingdom's Association of Illustrators.

- I'm currently obsessed with... making sorbet.
- The last thing I ate was... Thai chile
- My guilty food pleasure is... bacon drippings.



A former caterer and pastry chef, Rebecca Rather ("Cake Fancy," page 80) is the owner of Rather Sweet Bakery in Fredericksburg, Texas, where she is known

as The Pastry Queen. When not up to her elbows in flour and butter, she can be found writing cookbooks. Her most recent, written with Alison Oresman, is Pastry Queen Parties: Entertaining Friends and Family, Texas Style.

- Sweet or salty? Salty. That's why I'm relatively thin for a pastry chef. I don't eat my desserts—I just taste them.
- My go-to weeknight dinner is... a bison burger.
- My favorite food memory is... Thanksgiving dinner with my mom. I loved her cornbread dressing, which I haven't even come close to recreating.

TWO OF A KIND



Melissa Hamilton (right, stylist for "Dressed Up, Dressed Down," page 46) is the former executive chef and cofounder of Hamilton's Grill Room in Lambertville, New Jersey. Now she is a food stylist, recipe tester and developer, and editor for cookbooks and magazines. In 2007,

Hamilton and Christopher Hirsheimer (left, photographer for "Dressed Up, Dressed Down," page 46), opened their own studio, Canal House. Hirsheimer is a former food and design editor for Metropolitan Home and one of the founders of Saveur. She is also a writer and photographer who has cowritten several cookbooks, including her latest with Hamilton, Canal House Cooking, volume 2.

• For breakfast, I eat...

Melissa: strong coffee with half-and-half. Christopher: really good Greek yogurt with apricot preserves.

• My guilty food pleasure is...

Melissa: lots of mayonnaise.

Christopher: potato chips, preferably fried in lard.

My culinary icon is...

Melissa: Christopher Hirsheimer. Christopher: Melissa Hamilton.

Photographs (clockwise from top left) by Jamey Stillings, Madeleine Allen, Teresa Hopkins, Brooke Slezak

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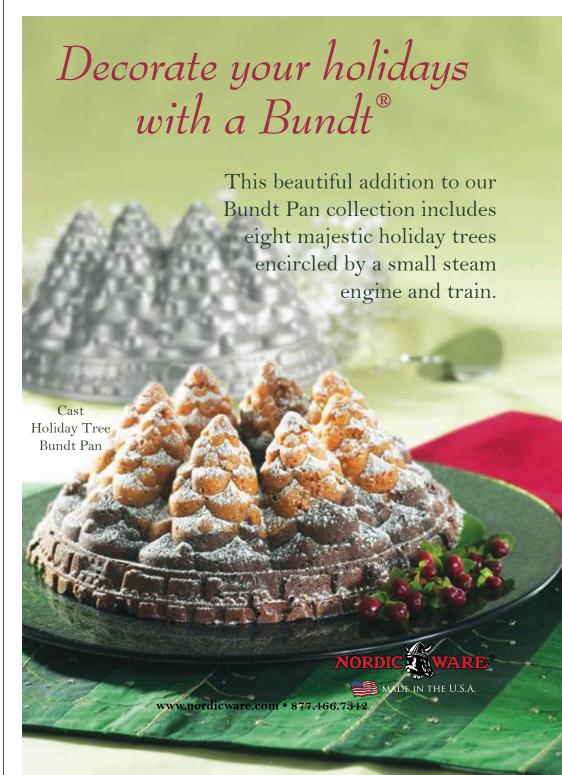
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TWO OF A KIND



Bruce Weinstein (left, "Preserving," page 22), a one-time advertising creative director and a Johnson & Wales graduate, and Mark Scarbrough (right, "Preserving," page 22), a former professor of American literature, currently write and develop recipes for magazines, newspapers, and Web sites. They have cowritten more than 15 cookbooks, including their most recent, Cooking Know-How. Their next

book, Ham: An Obsession with the Hindquarter, is due out in March 2010.

• Your culinary icon is...

Mark: Henry James. One winter in London, he dined out 140 times. He's my hero.

Bruce: Graham Kerr. Anyone who could drink that much wine while cooking dinner and still have it turn out great is my hero.

• What do you consider the most underrated or overrated ingredient?

Mark: Salt is underrated. Minerally, full of flavor, intense, crunchy sea salt. Bruce: Salt in general is overused. I like to salt as little as possible and only at the end of cooking.

Scrambled or fried?

Mark: Scrambled. I make them low and slow. Bruce always laughs at me, saying "He goes into the kitchen and a mere twenty minutes later, he's made scrambled eggs!"

Bruce: Fried, on one side only, the whites crispy around the edges and the yolks as runny as possible.



Daniel Hoyer ("True Tamales," page 72) is an author, chef, consultant, restaurateur, and culinary instructor who lives in Hanoi, Vietnam. He has opened

restaurants across the world, including Sydney, Salt Lake City, Oaxaca, and Hanoi, where he currently runs two restaurants. He also conducts culinary tours in Mexico and Vietnam, and has written five cookbooks, including Tamales, and his latest, Culinary Vietnam.

- If I were not a chef and author, I would be... a musician.
- My favorite comfort food is... sticky rice with chicken, mung beans, and a fried egg.
- I'm currently obsessed with... anything cooked over an open flame.



Adem Tepedelen ("Warm as a Toast," page 44) is a freelance writer, editor, and photographer who specializes in music, travel, food, and drink. His work has

appeared in Imbibe, CityFood Magazine, and Eat, and in 2008, he won a Michael Jackson Beer Journalism award. He lives and works in Victoria, British Columbia.

- My favorite food memory is... my first time eating sushi. I was with my brother, and he tried to give me things to gross me out, but it backfired. I was shocked at how much I liked all of it.
- For breakfast, I eat... what my wife calls gemischt cereal, which means "mixed" in German. I take three different cereals and dump them in a bowl together. She's horrified by it, hence the name.
- My favorite aspect of my job is... that I get to drink alcohol and say it's my job.

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PEPPERMINT BROWNIES



- 4 ounces 100% Cacao Unsweetened Chocolate Baking Bar
- 16 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups of sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup flour
- 12 Ghirardelli Dark Chocolate with Mint Filling Squares
- •1/4 cup crushed candy canes (about 4 small)

DIRECTIONS:

Heat oven to 350°F. Spray 9-inch-square baking pan with cooking spray; dust with flour, tapping out excess. In double boiler over hot water, melt chocolate and butter. Cool to room temperature. In large bowl with electric mixer or whisk, beat eggs, sugar, vanilla, peppermint extract and salt until combined. Beat in chocolate mixture; gently stir in flour. Pour batter into prepared pan.

Bake about 45 minutes or until knife inserted into brownies comes out clean.
Arrange mint squares on top in one layer; place brownies in oven 1 minute.
Spread melted mint squares with spatula

spread melted mint squares with spatula to frost brownies evenly; sprinkle with crushed candy canes. Cool completely; cut into 16 squares.

Makes 16 brownies.

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What's for Dinner?

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- A casual holiday open house
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SHOW US YOUR COOKIES

We want to see what's coming out of your kitchen this season. **Enter our second annual Holiday Cookie Contest** by sharing photos and recipes for your favorite holiday cookies in our CooksTalk gallery. You could win up to \$500 in prizes. (Our favorite cookies from last year's contest are featured on page 92 of this issue.)



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Yield - 6 servings

Center: 1/2 bar (2 oz) 60% Cacao Bittersweet Chocolate Baking Bar 1/4 cup heavy cream

Cake: Nonstick cooking spray 1 bar (4 oz) 60% Cacao Bittersweet Chocolate Baking Bar 8 Tbsp. (1 stick) unsalted butter

2 whole eggs 2 egg yolks 1/3 cup sugar 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract 1/4 cup cake flour

Raspberries and whipped cream for garnish

To make centers, melt chocolate and cream in double boiler. Whisk gently to blend. Refrigerate about 2 hours or until firm. Form into 6 balls; refrigerate until needed.

To make cake, heat oven to 400°F. Spray six 4-ounce ramekins or custard cups with cooking spray. Melt chocolate and butter in double boiler; whisk gently to blend. With an electric mixer, whisk eggs, yolks, sugar, and vanilla on high speed about 5 minutes or until thick and light. Fold melted chocolate mixture and flour into egg mixture just until combined. Spoon cake batter into ramekins. Place a chocolate ball in the middle of each ramekin.

Bake about 15 minutes or until cake is firm to the touch. Let it sit out of the oven for about 5 minutes. Run a small, sharp knife around inside of each ramekin, place a plate on top, invert and remove ramekin. Garnish with raspberries and a dollop of whipped cream.



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TRY THIS CHESTNUTS

What they are

Chestnut trees (Castanea sativa) are found in many countries, including China, Italy, Spain, Japan, and the United States. On the tree, the chestnuts are contained in a sharp, spiky husk, or burr, which can hold up to seven nuts at a time. Each chestnut has a hard brown outer shell and a bitter inner skin that must be removed before eating.

Low in fat, chestnuts are also an excellent source of fiber and vitamin C. Because they contain twice as much starch as a potato, they are used in Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe as a primary source of carbohydrates.

How to buy and store them

Look for chestnuts that are plump, firm, glossy, and heavy for their size. Avoid ones with bruises or cracks and those that rattle when you shake them, which means they have begun to dry out. Store them in a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to two weeks, or freeze them for up to three months.

How to cook with them

Never eat fresh chestnuts raw—they're very tannic and tart, and their shells are almost impossible to remove. To eat or cook with a chestnut, you must first peel the shell and remove the inner skin. This is usually done by boiling or roasting. Boiling chestnuts mellows them, so use this method if you want to pair them with other flavors. Roasting yields a concentrated flavor, so use this method if you want to eat the chestnuts alone or if they're meant to be the star of a finished dish.

To boil chestnuts, use a sharp paring knife to score an X on the flat side of each nut. Bring them to a boil in a pot of cold water, boil until they're tender when squeezed (or poke them with a skewer, if you like), about 15 minutes, and then drain. When they're cool enough to handle (but still warm), peel the shells and inner skin.

To roast chestnuts, follow the method described in the recipe at right.

After peeling the chestnuts, you can eat them or cook with them. Chestnuts pair well with cabbage, mushrooms, carrots, sage, and pork in savory preparations, and with apples, cream, dried fruit, and chocolate in sweet dishes. -Melissa Pellegrino



Get information on hundreds of ingredients at FineCooking.com/ingredients.



rinsed, and thinly sliced crosswise

1½ Tbs. chopped fresh thyme; more for garnish

10 cups lower-salt chicken broth Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

oz. thinly sliced prosciutto, cut into thin strips

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. In a medium bowl, cover the chestnuts with warm water and soak for 25 minutes. Drain and dry with paper towels. Score an X into the flat side of each chestnut, cutting all the way through the shell. Put them flat sides up on a rimmed baking sheet and roast until the Xs curl back into a crown shape and they are tender when squeezed, about 30 minutes. Peel while still warm, removing both the shell and the inner skin. If a shell resists

the broth and 1/2 tsp. salt; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the chestnuts are extremely tender, about 30 minutes, skimming off any foam that rises to the surface. Let cool briefly.

Working in batches, purée the soup, either in a regular blender or with a hand blender. Strain the soup through a fine sieve into a clean 4-quart pot. Set the soup back over medium-low heat and gently reheat. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Meanwhile, in an 8-inch nonstick skillet, heat the remaining 1 tsp. oil over medium heat. Add the prosciutto and cook, stirring frequently, until crisp, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the remaining 1/2 Tbs. thyme and cook 30 seconds more. Drain on a plate lined with paper towels. Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with some of the prosciutto and thyme.



Being the DOLE Salad Guide means I know everything about salad – and now you can too. The NEW Salad Guide from DOLE is a helpful packaging feature that will boost your culinary knowledge and help you explore the wide variety of delicious DOLE salads like a pro. With flavors that range from mild to bold and textures that take you from tender to crunchy, the new DOLE Salad Guide is all you'll need to start mixing it up and getting creative in the kitchen. I've even matched each salad blend with unique "Pairs well with..." ideas, like the perfect dressing and other tasty ingredients to help you create your next culinary masterpiece. With the DOLE Salad Guide on your side, you'll be a salad expert in no time – the possibilities are endless and the inspiration is right there on the bag.

Learn how the DOLE Salad Guide can inspire you at dole.com/salads



WHAT WE'RE COOKING NOW

Dates, Pomegranates, Belgian Endive

Nine ways to use three seasonal ingredients we can't get enough of. Fine Cooking editors share some delicious ideas.





Date-pecan spread In a food processor, pulse

toasted pecans, chopped pitted dates, the grated zest of an orange, and

enough dry sherry to form a smooth paste. This makes a nice addition to a cheese plate, or spread it on a grilled cheese sandwich or a turkey panini. -Lisa Waddle



Bacon-wrapped stuffed dates

Fill a pitted date with a small piece of Parmigiano-Reggiano, then wrap it

with half of a thin slice of bacon. Roast, turning once, until the bacon -Juli Roberts is crisp.



Couscous with dates and lemon vinaigrette Stir chopped pitted

dates, toasted pine nuts, and chopped fresh pars-

ley and mint into toasted, cooked, and cooled Israeli couscous. Season with salt and pepper and dress with a lemon vinaigrette.

—Melissa Pellegrino

Pomegranates



Blood orange and pomegranate salsa Cut blood orange segments into ½-inch pieces and toss them

in a bowl with pomegranate seeds, diced red onion, minced jalapeño, and a drizzle of honey and fresh lime or lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper and serve with chicken, turkey, or white fish, such as halibut. -Laura Giannatempo



Pomegranate martini Mix up a festive cocktail with your favorite vodka

or gin and pomegranate liqueur. Garnish with

pomegranate seeds.

—Jennifer Armentrout

Pomegranate gelées

Make a pretty dessert by combining a packet of unflavored gelatin dissolved in a little water with some simple syrup, your favorite prosecco or sweet white wine, and plenty of pomegranate seeds. Pour into Champagne glasses, chill until firm, and serve with long spoons.

—Samantha Seneviratne

Belgian Endive



Belgian endive with tuna tartare Combine soy sauce, grated fresh ginger, lime juice and zest, thinly

sliced scallions, minced fresh red chile, and a splash of vegetable oil. Gently mix with very finely diced sushi-quality tuna. Pile the tuna tartare into trimmed Belgian endive leaves and serve as an hors d'oeuvre. You can also thickly slice some Belgian endive and combine it with the tartare for a light first course.

—Denise Mickelsen



Creamy braised Belgian endive Cook some chopped garlic in a little olive oil and butter until fragrant.

Add halved Belgian endives and some chicken or vegetable broth. Cover and braise until tender. Finish with a little cream, a squeeze of lemon juice, and some chopped fresh parsley.

—Samantha Seneviratne

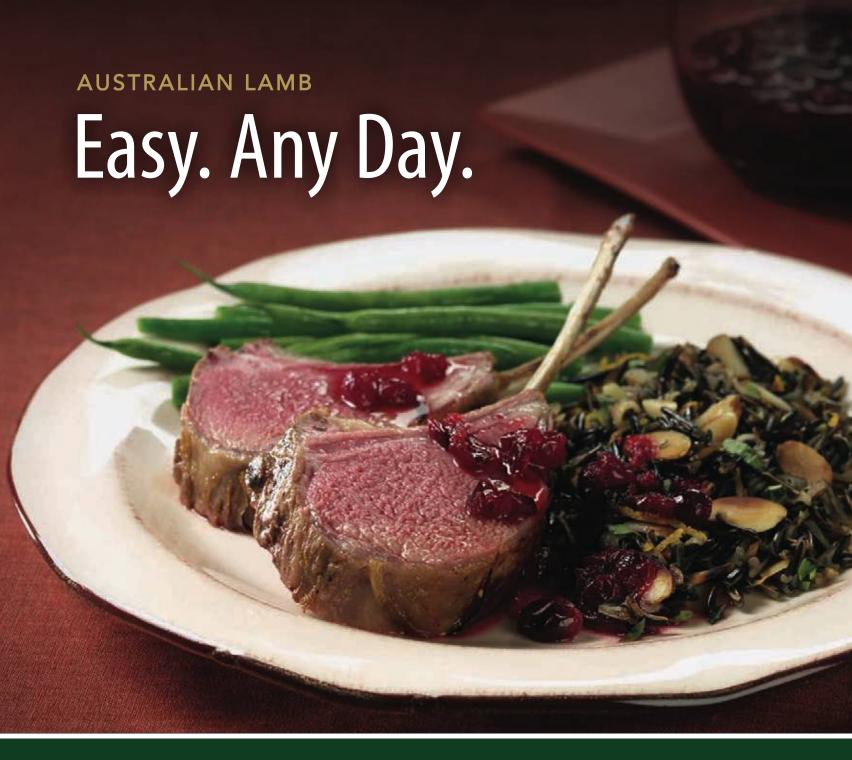


Belgian endive bites with goat cheese and smoked salmon Mix chopped fresh dill

into soft goat cheese and then spoon some of the mixture into the bottom end of trimmed Belgian endive leaves, topping each with a thin slice of smoked salmon. Garnish each with a small sprig of dill.

-Rebecca Freedman





cranberry-marinated rack of aussie lamb with almond wild rice



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PRESERVING THE SEASON

Clementines

When the season gives you clementines, preserve them in honey. BY BRUCE WEINSTEIN AND MARK SCARBROUGH

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, wooden crates filled with sweet, juicy clementines are piling up at the markets. Members of the Mandarin orange family and cousins to tangerines, clementines are typically seedless, with thin, easy-topeel skins. And though clementines seem to be everywhere now, before you know it, they'll be gone, a mere memory of the holiday season.

Keep that memory alive by preserving clementines in a syrup made from honey, sugar, and spices. It cures the elementines, drawing water out of them and preventing the growth of harmful bacteria. It also makes their rinds ultratender and their flesh silky soft. This way, you can eat the entire clementine, rind and all, for many months to come.

honey-preserved clementines

Jars of preserved clementines make great gifts at this time of year (if you can bear to part with them).

Yields 1 quart

- 1 cup honey
- cup granulated sugar
- whole cloves
- green cardamom pods
- 4-inch cinnamon stick
- lb. firm clementines (5 to 7), cut horizontally into 34-inchthick slices

In a 4-quart saucepan, bring 1 cup water and the honey, sugar, cloves, cardamom, and cinnamon stick to a boil over high heat.

Gently slip the clementines into the liquid without stirring. (If any slices are mostly rind, place them rind down.) Return to a full boil and then reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, cover, and set aside overnight, at least 8 and up to 12 hours. Spoon and gently pack the slices into a 1-quart canning jar. Bring the syrup in the saucepan back to a boil over medium-high heat; boil 3 min-

Pour the syrup over the slices to cover; discard any excess syrup. Cool to room temperature. Seal and refrigerate for at least 1 week before using. The clementines will keep in the refrigerator for up to 3 months.

utes to concentrate the flavors.

Variations: Substitute 11/2 lb. seedless thin-skinned oranges (such as Valencia or blood oranges), seeded Meyer lemons, or seeded tangerines.

Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough are Connecticut-based cookbook authors and recipe developers. Their latest book, Cooking Know-How, was published in March.

From Jar to Table

Honey-preserved clementines are delicious for dessert all on their own (or with a dollop of mascarpone or crème fraîche), but there are many other culinary uses for this versatile preserve. Chop and:

- stir into yogurt or rice pudding
- add to frosting for a cake, or decorate with thin slices
- use as a topping for vanilla ice cream
- stuff into cored apples before baking
- stir into beef stew
- add to a lamb tagine
- use in a stuffing for roast turkey, chicken, or duck



Roasted Pears with Almonds, Cranberries and White Chocolate Drizzle

(Makes 8 servings)

3/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar

- 2 tsp. McCormick® Gourmet Collection Saigon Cinnamon
- 1 tsp. McCormick® Gourmet Collection Ground Nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. McCormick® Gourmet Collection Ground Cloves
- 4 firm ripe pears, such as Bosc <u>or</u> Anjou, halved and cored
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter, melted
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
 - 4 oz. white baking chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries, coarsely chopped

MIX sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves in small bowl. Place pear halves, cut-side up, in 13"x 9"x 2" baking dish sprayed with no stick cooking spray. Drizzle with melted butter. Sprinkle with brown sugar mixture.

BAKE in preheated 400°F oven 30 minutes or until pears are tender, spooning brown sugar mixture over pears halfway through baking. Cool slightly.

BRING cream just to boil in small saucepan on medium heat. Remove from heat. Add white chocolate; stir until chocolate is melted and sauce is smooth.

TO SERVE, place 1 pear half on each of 8 dessert plates. Stir brown sugar mixture in baking dish. Spoon over pears. Sprinkle with almonds and cranberries. Drizzle pears generously with white chocolate sauce. Serve immediately.





lentil salad with fennel and smoked salmon

If you can't find French green lentils du Puy, substitute brown lentils. Cook them until just tender so they don't fall apart when you toss the salad.

Yields about 4 cups; serves 4 to 6

- 1 cup French green lentils du Puy, rinsed and picked over for stones
- medium clove garlic
 Kosher salt
- 1/2 medium shallot, finely chopped (about 1½ Tbs.)
- 3 Tbs. Champagne vinegar
- 2 tsp. finely grated fresh ginger (use small holes on a box grater)
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp. fennel seed, coarsely ground Freshly ground black pepper
- ⅓ cup canola oil
- 9 small radishes, halved and thinly sliced (about 1 cup)
- 3/2 small bulb fennel, quartered lengthwise and thinly sliced crosswise (about 1 cup), plus 1 Tbs. chopped fennel fronds

- 2 Tbs. sliced fresh chives; more for garnish
- 4 oz. cold-smoked salmon, cut into ½-inch squares (about ½ cup)

In a medium saucepan, combine the lentils with 4 cups water. Simmer over medium heat until just tender, 20 to 30 minutes. Drain in a colander and let cool to room temperature.

Roughly chop the garlic, sprinkle it with a pinch of salt, and mash to a paste with the flat side of a chef's knife. In a medium bowl, whisk the garlic paste, shallot, vinegar, ginger, mustard, fennel seed, 11/2 tsp. salt, and 1/4 tsp. pepper. Whisk in the oil. In a large bowl, toss the lentils, radishes, fennel, fennel fronds, and chives with just enough of the vinaigrette to coat everything lightly (you may not need it all). Season to taste with salt and pepper. (You can prepare the salad to this point up to 4 hours ahead.) Just before serving, gently stir in the salmon and a few grinds of pepper. Garnish with chives and serve.

smoked salmon deviled eggs

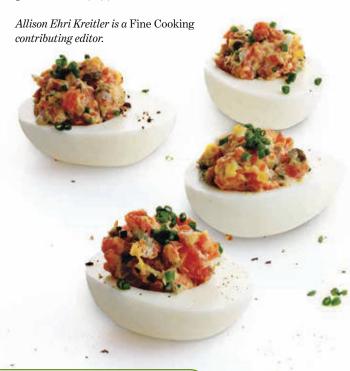
To dress these up for a party, top each egg with a small dollop of salmon roe.

Yields 12

- 6 large hard-cooked eggs
- 4 oz. cold-smoked salmon, very finely diced (about ½ cup)
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh chives
- 14 cup mayonnaise
- 2 Tbs. minced red onion
- 2 Tbs. capers, rinsed and finely chopped
- 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp. packed finely grated lemon zest Freshly ground black pepper

 $\textbf{Peel and halve the eggs} \ \text{lengthwise}.$

Remove the yolks and crumble them into a medium bowl. Add the salmon, 3 Tbs. of the chives, the mayonnaise, onion, capers, lemon juice, zest, and ½ tsp. pepper and mix. Mound the filling into the egg whites. Garnish with the remaining 1 Tbs. chives and several grinds of black pepper.



The Big Buy

What: Cold-smoked salmon (vacuum-packed). Often mislabeled as lox, cold-smoked salmon is fresh salmon that's cured with salt, sugar, and seasonings and then smoked at temperatures below 80°F. It's best not to cook cold-smoked salmon because heat alters its smooth, delicate texture. (And don't confuse cold-smoked salmon with hot-smoked salmon, which is smoked over higher heat to an internal temperature of 145°F for a drier, flakier result.)

How Much: 1- to 1½-lb. packages.

How to Store: When opening, cut the plastic wrapping away from the salmon, but keep its cardboard backing intact. This way, you can store any uneaten salmon on the cardboard, wrapping the entire package in clean plastic. Cold-smoked salmon will keep in the refrigerator, tightly wrapped, for up to a week.



Great Finds

Special Edition: Gift ideas for every cook on your list. BY DENISE MICKELSEN



Stocking Stuffers

\$25 OR LESS

A Cool Tool

Perfect for grating fluffy piles of Parmigiano Reggiano or shaving chocolate, this versatile grater by Chef'n has a rubber base, so it's slip-free. \$10 at cook ing.com/fc; 800-663-8810.



These chocolate-covered fruit and nut confections are impossible to resist. Our favorites: Cherries Two Ways and Burnt Caramel Hazelnuts. \$12 for a 6-ounce box at recchiuti .com; 800-500-3396.



Sweet and Sour

Honey Ridge Farms makes this unusual (and delicious) honey balsamic vinegar by fermenting its all-natural honey into vinegar, then aging it in oak barrels. **\$12 for an** 8.45-ounce bottle at honeyridgefarms .com; 360-256-0086.



Prepare frothy Mexican-style hot chocolate at home with this traditional handcarved molinillo. Just put it in a pot of hot chocolate and twist it between your hands to froth the drink. **Hernán** molinillo, \$14 at deananddeluca.com; 800-221-7714.



These quirky handprinted letterpress coasters feature roadside liquor signs. Set of six for \$10 at bobs youruncle.com; 617-670-3782.



Great Buys

\$50 OR LESS

A Bird in the Hand

A set of these cute porcelain plates includes two with a distant view of colorful animals and two with a close-up view. They're great for starters, desserts, or cheese. Available in owl, squirrel, raccoon, and chicken (shown). \$50 for a set of four 71/2-inch plates; colorstoryhome.com; 877-744-8424.



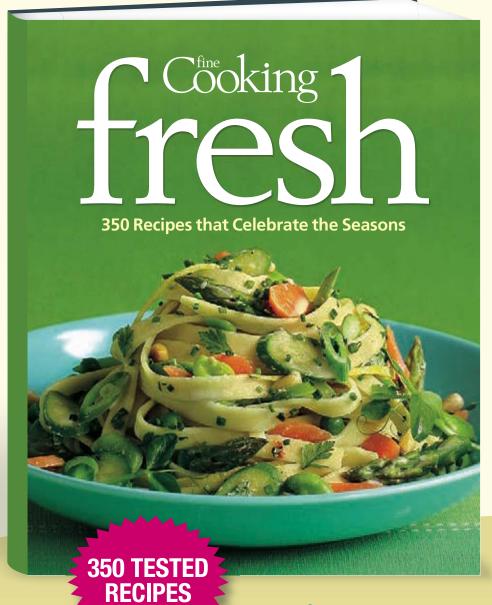
Carafe with Class

Perfect for water or wine, this elegant handblown glass carafe features a wooden sphere topper. \$43 (37-ounce size) at popdeluxe.net; 800-399-5757.



Photographs by Scott Phillips

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Root Beer with Benefits

Root organic liqueur is a delicious re-creation of Pennsylvania root tea, a potent drink from the 1700s that evolved into root beer after Prohibition. It's great on the rocks or in a cocktail. \$39 for a 750-ml bottle at hitimewine.net; 800-331-3005.



Chilewich's new pressed vinyl coral-pattern placemats and table runners are a striking addition to any table. \$8 to \$35; chilewich

.com for stores.

On the Rack

Wavy interlocking laminated birch wood panels make for a stylish and functional wine rack. \$40 at centuryhouseinc .com; 608-233-4488.



Juliska's new line of pewter-glazed stoneware baking dishes are much more affordable than real pewter and can go from the oven, microwave, or freezer to table. They're dishwasher-safe, too. **3-quart rectangular** baker, \$68 at juliska.com; 888-414-8448.





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This charcoal slate and cherry wood serving tray with elegant visible lap joints was inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th century. \$95 at jkadams .com; 800-451-6118.



Tasty Notes

These delightful note cards feature assorted food and drink designs and come in a handmade wooden box that doubles as a recipe box. \$64 for 30 cards and envelopes at pancakeandfranks.com; 415-642-7667.

The Big Splurge

\$100 OR MORE



Super Cuts

Sleek, light, and well balanced, these new Japanese knives from Zwilling J.A. Henckels, made from MicroCarbide powder steel, are unbelievably sharp. Miyabi 7000 MC line, \$139 to \$229 at metrokitchen.com; 888-892-9911.



All-in-One

This new food processor from Cuisinart comes with three nested work bowls (14 cup, 11 cup, and 4½ cup), two cutting blades, a dough blade, and a BladeLock system that holds the blade in place during use and even while pouring. Elite Collection 14-cup food processor, \$279 to \$299 at amazon.com.

The Big Apple

The color of KitchenAid's new candy-apple red stand mixer was inspired by vintage automobiles, and the 5-quart glass mixing bowl is a fantastic update to its traditional stainlesssteel bowl. Artisan Series stand mixer, \$350 at williams-sonoma.com; 877-812-6235.





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Venezia Food & Dreams

by Tessa Kiros

(Andrews McMeel, \$35)

Venezia, by award-winning food writer Tessa Kiros, is a book you can get lost in. Through its alluring photography, gilded design, and more than 100 authentic recipes, this book embodies Venice. It's a place where humble polenta is revered and seafood is always a star, where you can whet your appetite with an assortment of small bites (cicchetti) or sate it with a multicourse meal. Whether you want to savor the city's mysteries or its flavors, you'll find satisfaction in these pages.

Momofuku

by David Chang and Peter Meehan

(Clarkson Potter, \$40)

Superstar chef David Chang's arresting (and totally gorgeous) first book offers lots of doable (and some not-so-doable) recipes from his critically acclaimed Momofuku restaurants in Manhattan. The cherry tomato salad with soft tofu and shiso leaves is an easy, inspired riff on insalata caprese, and Momofuku Ko's coveted cornflake-infused milk custard dessert isn't nearly as difficult to make as it sounds. Noodles, pan-roasts, and braises are all within reach at home (though any recipe involving pigs' heads should probably be left to the pros). Best yet, this book offers something that you can't get at Chang's restaurants: a chance to get into the mind of one of America's most interesting chefs.

Jam It, Pickle It, Cure It **And Other Cooking Projects**

by Karen Solomon

(Ten Speed Press, \$25)

Warning: This charming book may trigger fits of kitchen activity. Solomon imbues the crafting of preserves, pickles, condiments, candies, and cordials with a hip new sensibility. And the captivating photos and creative packaging ideas are sure to inspire you to stock your own larder with homemade butter, mustard, and jam. So good-bye, prefab food; hello, DIY crackers, pasta, hot sauce, bacon, mayo, marshmallows, chocolates, and more.

My New Orleans: The Cookbook

200 of My Favorite Recipes & Stories from My Hometown

by John Besh

(Andrews McMeel, \$45)

This glorious book is award-winning chef John Besh's testament to his beloved hometown. Most of the book follows the city's gastronomic calendar, highlighting celebrations (like Mardi Gras, Feast Days, and Réveillon) and ingredients (oysters, chanterelles, blackberries, speckled trout, and the like) in their season. Besh honors classics like gumbo, but he also breaks with tradition, perfuming spoonbread with truffle oil (not bacon fat) and serving garlicky aïoli (not cocktail sauce or lemon) with big, meaty Louisiana oysters.

Stir

Mixing It Up in the Italian Tradition

by Barbara Lynch

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$35)

At long last, Barbara Lynch, chef-owner of Boston's No. 9 Park (and several other area restaurants), has written the cookbook her admirers have been hungering for. Her contemporary French/Italian-inspired food is refined but approachable, like Green Bean and Seared Shrimp Salad with Spicy Curry Vinaigrette (addictive) or Pork Chops with Caramelized Apples, Celery, and Spiced Walnuts (symphonic). Helpful sidebars inspire, instruct, and ensure happy results.

Vefa's Kitchen

by Vefa Alexiadou

(Phaidon Press, \$45)

This encyclopedic volume by Greece's leading culinary authority would make a striking addition to any cookbook collection. In many ways, Greeks today eat as they have for centuries, relying on grains, beans, fresh vegetables, olives, figs, grapes, honey, and cheese. And while every region has its specialties—from the simple grilled fish dishes of the coast to the rich meat and vegetable pies from mountain villages-Greek cooks are united in their commitment to simple, fresh, seasonal, local food. Sounds trendy, but the recipes in this book prove that it's a delicious philosophy as old as time.

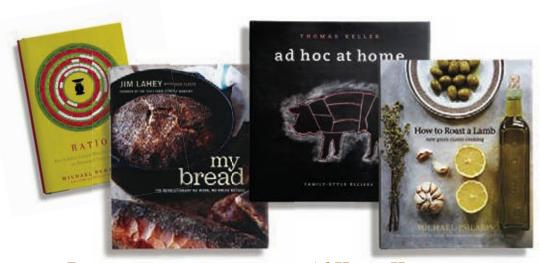
Continued on page 34





** Here's to the things in life you can count on. Blackstone Winery. All the awards, without the pretensions. That's why we're America's favorite Merlot.





Ratio

The Simple Codes Behind the Craft of Everyday Cooking

by Michael Ruhlman

(Scribner, \$27)

In this fascinating cookbook, Ruhlman zeroes in on the ratios among fundamental ingredients: flour, water, fat, milk, eggs. He contends that learning these ratios deepens your understanding of recipes in a way that blindly following them never could. Chapters focus on doughs and batters, custards, sauces, stocks, and sausages-recipes where ingredient ratios clearly define the outcome (e.g., flour and water might equal bread or pasta, depending on the ratio). For cooks who dream of creating original recipes, this book provides the building blocks. It can also help you spot great recipes elsewhere, because when you understand culinary ratios, you can judge a recipe's potential simply by reading it.

My Bread The Revolutionary No-Work, No-Knead Method

by Jim Lahey with Rick Flaste

(W.W. Norton & Company, \$30)

In 2006, The New York Times ran an artisan bread recipe using a no-knead, bake-in-a-pot technique that shook up the food world. Here, the genius behind the recipe, Jim Lahev, founder of Manhattan's Sullivan Street Bakery, builds upon his method, offering detailed recipes for many of the deeply flavored loaves sold at his shop—from crusty stirati (baguettes) and ciabatta to simple pizzas and focaccia. Also included is a fantastic chapter on sandwich making and several recipes for using up stale bread, which you'll have plenty of if this book gets you hooked on baking. And chances are, it will.

Ad Hoc at Home

by Thomas Keller

(Artisan Books, \$50)

Please don't park this handsome hardcover on your coffee table—Thomas Keller, chef of the French Laundry and Ad Hoc in the Napa Valley and Per Se in Manhattan, wants it to live in your kitchen, growing smudged and splattered with use. This is real, uncomplicated home cooking based on the food served at Ad Hoc, Keller's casual, family-style restaurant. He offers everything you could want: Nostalgic favorites like fried chicken and biscuits and grilled cheese sandwiches, to special-occasion roasts and braises, hearty soups, main-course salads, and lots of bright ideas that will make you a much smarter cook.

How to Roast a Lamb New Greek Classic Cooking

by Michael Psilakis

(Little, Brown & Co., \$35)

This collection of recipes and loving reminiscences is so much more than its title suggests. The book is compelling enough to be read cover to cover like a memoir (each thematic chapter opens with a personal essay followed by recipes), but don't stop there. You've got to cook from it to fully experience Psilakis's brilliance and big heart. One of Manhattan's top young chefs, he draws from his Greek heritage to create contemporary fare that's entirely his own. In his hands, simple rustic food—a onepan braise of quails, fennel, and apricots, say, or (yes) roasted leg of lamb—reaches exquisite new heights.

Kimberly Y. Masibay is a Fine Cooking contributing editor.

Stocking Stuffers

What We Eat When We Eat Alone Stories and 100 Recipes

by Deborah Madison and Patrick McFarlin

(Gibbs Smith, \$25)

In this lighthearted exposé, cookbook author Deborah Madison and her artist husband reveal the truth about what we eat when no one's watching. Impossible to put down, this book is pure, unabashed fun.

Salt

Cooking with the World's Favourite Seasoning

by Valerie Aikman-Smith

(Ryland Peters & Small, \$16)

Here, salt is the star. This lovely little book begins with an overview of salts, then offers page after tempting page of uncomplicated recipes for appetizers, entrées, sides, drinks, and sweets.

Notes on Cooking

A Short Guide to an Essential Craft

by Lauren Braun Costello and Russell Reich

(RCR Creative Press, \$22)

You'd have to read through a vast culinary library to glean all of the brilliant ideas in this one little book. Whether you're a new cook or a seasoned pro, the tips and lessons in this volume will inspire and enrich you.

Canal House Cooking

Volume 2

by Melissa Hamilton and Christopher Hirsheimer

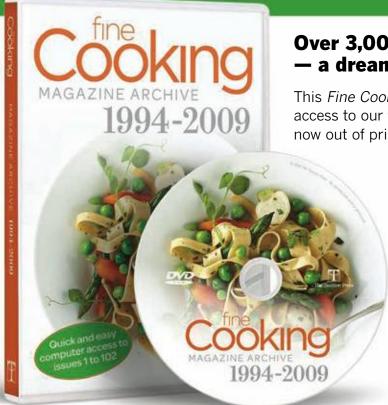
(Canal House, \$20)

The multitalented duo of Hirsheimer and Hamilton (see "Dressed Up, Dressed Down," page 46) share a workspace called Canal House, where in the midst of their various food-related projects, they pause to cook amazing food for themselves. In this, one of three volumes planned for this year, they offer deeply satisfying recipes and luminous photos and illustrations.



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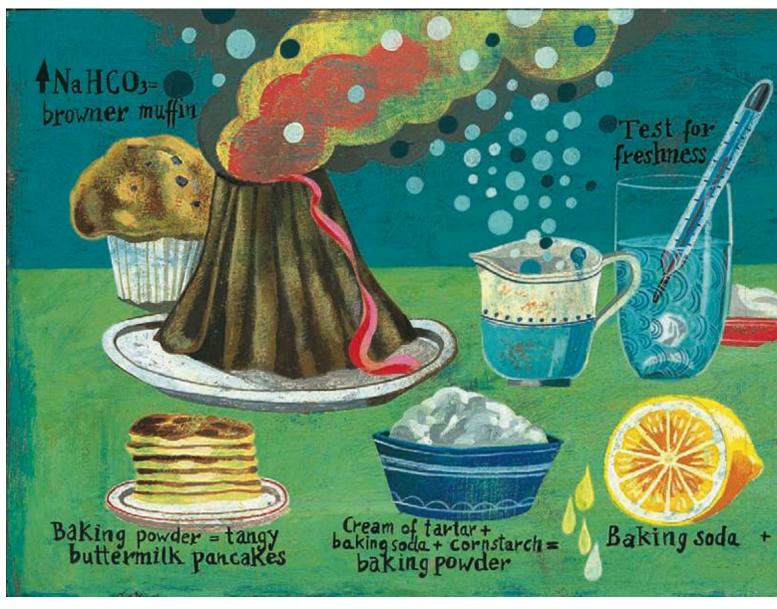
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Baking Soda and Baking Powder

How these two leaveners get a rise out of baked goods. BY BRIAN GEIGER

IN JUNIOR HIGH SCIENCE CLASS, I learned that baking soda was an alkaline powder. (Yes, I paid attention in junior high science.) Because baking soda is alkaline, when it's mixed with acid, it neutralizes some or all of that acid, and in the process gives off carbon dioxide gas. My teacher demonstrated this memorably with a model volcano that bubbled up and erupted when he added vinegar to red food coloring and baking soda.

When I got into the kitchen as an adult, I remembered that volcano, and so I understood how baking soda works-the carbon

dioxide gas that's given off enlarges bubbles that already exist in a batter or dough, which helps baked goods rise. But what about baking powder? Since it didn't get covered in my science class, I had to do my own research (fun!).

What's the difference?

I'm sure I'm not the only cook who has wondered if baking powder and baking soda are interchangeable, and why some recipes call for one, the other, or both. The fact is,

both are leaveners, meaning they help baked goods like cakes, biscuits, and pancakes rise. The difference is in how they're activated.

Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate, or NaHCO₂ for all you geeks in training) needs an acid to enable it to give off the gas that enlarges a batter's bubbles. This acid could be lemon juice, buttermilk, yogurt, or vinegar (remember the volcano?). But more baking soda doesn't necessarily equal more lift. You want to use only enough to react with the amount of acid in your batter. Too much soda and not enough acid to activate it all means





that you'll have unreacted soda left over, which will create a bitter or soapy flavor.

Baking powder, on the other hand, is a complete package: it contains baking soda and enough acid to cause a balanced reaction. To activate it, all you need to do is add a liquid (which, by definition, a batter has to contain anyway).

Types of baking powder

Being self-contained isn't baking powder's only trick. When you mix wet and dry ingredients, baking powder activates instantly, enlarging bubbles in the batter and making it rise. But if you don't work quickly and get the batter into the oven in just a few minutes, those bubbles will rise right out of the batter and into the air. So with a careful application

of science, manufacturers have made baking powder work according to your schedule by using acids that don't dissolve in water until they reach a certain temperature. (This is useful with batters and doughs that need to chill before going in the oven.)

That's why you'll sometimes see baking powder with different labels. "Fast-acting" reacts at room temperature. In "slow-acting" baking powder, the acid doesn't dissolve until it reaches a higher temperature, so it won't start rising until it hits the oven. "Doubleacting" plays it both ways-it does some reacting at room temperature and finishes up its reaction in the oven. Most of the baking powders you find in the supermarket are double-acting; the other types are used mainly by restaurants and commercial bakers. If you find a baking powder on the shelf and its label doesn't specify a type (or your recipe calls for just baking powder) you can assume it's the double-acting type.

Choose your leavener

Generally, if you have a recipe that includes an acid (such as molasses added for flavor),

Homemade baking powder

There are two reasons you might want to make your own baking powder:

- 1. You get to choose the ingredients that go into it (and can avoid acids that contain aluminum, which may result in a metallic taste).
- 2. It will be really fresh (because if the purchased kind is kept on the shelf too long, moisture from the air can cause the acid to mix with the baking soda, thereby neutralizing both).

It's simple to do. Mix two parts cream of tartar with one part baking soda and one part cornstarch. Store in a cool, dry place for up to several months. How long it lasts depends on how air-tight it's stored, how often you open it, and the humidity.

To test the freshness of your baking powder, either homemade or purchased, add 1 tsp. to 1 cup of hot water. The mixture should bubble. If it doesn't, toss it.

you'd choose baking soda, which is activated by that acid. If you have a recipe that has no acid (say, eggs, milk, flour, and sugar), you'll want baking powder as your leavening agent, because it has the acid built in. Also, doubleacting baking powder has that delayed secondary rise when heat is applied.

But it's not always this cut and dried: Some recipes use both baking soda and powder. These recipes usually contain some acidic ingredient, such as fruit or yogurt, but the carbon dioxide created when the baking soda reacts with the acid isn't enough to leaven the amount of batter in the recipe. That's where baking powder steps in, to add the necessary extra lift. It's all a matter of having the right balance in the recipe.

Beyond lift: more flavor and better browning

Another reason to use both baking soda and powder is that they affect flavor and browning in different ways. Take the recipe for buttermilk pancakes on page 39. In it, buttermilk is used partly for its flavor. If you used baking soda alone, it could neutralize all of the buttermilk's acid, and you'd lose that tanginess. But by including baking powder, which brings its own acid, some of the tang is left behind, and there's still enough leavening for light-as-air pancakes.

As for browning, too much acid will inhibit it—browning happens best in an alkaline environment. Baking soda not only reacts with the acid to create lift in the pancake recipe, it also creates an alkaline environment. And that means better browning. If you left out the baking soda and used only baking powder in the pancakes, they would rise, but wouldn't brown as well. So a golden-brown and delicious pancake is one that has a more alkaline pH.

With this tiny amount of chemical knowledge, you now have far greater control over your muffins, pancakes, and quick breads. Whether you want tangier, taller, or browner, using the proper leaveners in the proper ways will give you the baked treat you're looking for.

Brian Geiger is a robotics project manager by day, Food Geek by night. Follow his blog at FineCooking.com.

HOW TO MAKE

Pancakes

A breakfast favorite all cooks should have in their recipe boxes. BY DENISE MICKELSEN

NOTHING BEATS STARTING THE DAY with a stack of fluffy, tender, piping-hot buttermilk pancakes. Luckily, they're easy to make at home, and their light texture and slightly tangy flavor make them far superior

to any pancake that comes from a mix. Keep in mind the simple tips listed below, and you'll be flipping your way to a delicious breakfast in no time.

Need to Know

Mix separately Mixing the wet and dry ingredients in separate bowls helps avoid overmixing after you've combined them. Overmixing leads to tough, heavy pancakes. **Keep it lumpy** To minimize gluten formation, mix the wet ingredients into the dry just until the batter is evenly moistened; there should still be lumps 1.

Let it rest Letting the batter sit while you heat the griddle allows any gluten that has formed a chance to relax, giving you a more tender pancake.

Use the right heat If your griddle is too hot, the pancakes will burn but stay raw inside. Too cold, and they won't brown or rise. The griddle is at the right temperature when water droplets dance on it before evaporating.

Know when to flip Cook pancakes until bubbles cover the exposed surface, the edges look dry, and the bottoms are nicely browned. Flip before all the bubbles break 2.





Tool Kit

Check to make sure you have these kitchen essentials before making pancakes:

- Small microwave-safe bowl or small saucepan
- Whisk
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Medium and large bowls
- Stovetop griddle, electric griddle, or large skillet
- Spatula
- Baking sheet

Buttermilk Stand-Ins

These pancakes get their tangy flavor and light-as-air texture from buttermilk. But in a pinch, you can use any of these substitutions:

- Powdered buttermilk Use according to package directions, adding water to the wet ingredients and the powder to the dry.
- "Sour milk" Add 2 Tbs. white vinegar or lemon juice to 2 cups whole milk and let it stand for 10 minutes to thicken slightly; add to the wet ingredients.
- Yogurt and milk Add1cup plain yogurt and 1cup milk (both can be full-fat or low-fat) to the wet ingredients.

buttermilk pancakes

You can add fresh berries, thinly sliced fruit, or even crumbled crisp bacon to this batter for an extra hit of flavor. Or substitute ½ cup wheat germ, cornmeal, or whole-wheat flour for ½ cup of the all-purpose flour. This recipe can be easily doubled or tripled.

Yields about 17

- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter; more for serving
- 9 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 21/2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 large eggs Vegetable oil for the griddle

Pure maple syrup for serving

Heat the oven to 200°F. Melt the butter in a small bowl in the microwave or in a small saucepan on the stove and set aside to cool briefly.

In a large bowl, whisk the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In a medium bowl, whisk the buttermilk and eggs. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Whisk gently until the dry ingredients are almost incorporated; stop before the batter is evenly moistened. Add the cooled melted butter and mix just until the batter is evenly moistened (there will be lumps). Let the batter rest while you heat the griddle.

Heat a griddle or a large skillet over medium heat (or set an electric griddle to 375°F) until drops of water briefly dance on the surface

before evaporating. Lightly oil the griddle. Working in batches, pour ¼ cup of the batter onto the griddle for each pancake, spacing them about 1 inch apart. Let cook undisturbed until bubbles rise to the surface and the edges look dry, 1 to 2 minutes. Check the underside of each pancake to make sure it's nicely browned; then flip. Cook until the second side is nicely browned, about 1 minute more. Transfer the pancakes to a baking sheet and keep warm in the oven while you repeat with the remaining batter.

Serve hot with butter and maple syrup.

Make ahead: Cooked pancakes will keep, sealed in freezer bags, for up to 2 days in the refrigerator and up to 1 month in the freezer. Defrost in the refrigerator overnight and reheat in a 350°F oven for 5 minutes.





The New Geometry of the Plate

Rethink the American dinner plate. That means more vegetables, less meat, and whole grains. BY ELLIE KRIEGER

PICTURE THE OLD-FASHIONED dinner plate: Half is heaped with meat, one-third is taken up by potatoes (or white rice), and the remaining small fraction is left for vegetables. Unfortunately, these proportions haven't done our health and physical stats any good. The fact is, to be fit and healthy, we need to shift our focus toward more fruits and vegetables and away from refined grains and big hunks of high-fat meats. That's why it's time to rethink our plate geometry. By dedicating half of the plate to colorful vegetables, one quarter to lean protein, and the other quarter to whole grains, you can easily put together a better-balanced meal.

Vegetables rule

I tease my husband, Thom, because when he cooks and I ask him what's for dinner, he says "steak." And that's exactly what he'll serve—a plate of steak with no sides at all. (You'd think he'd pick up a thing or two, living with me for so long.) He might be an extreme example, but his mentality reflects that of many cooks: A meal is mainly about the protein. Sadly, this often means that vegetables are merely an afterthought, and as a result, not very interesting or desirable.

But when you think of vegetables as a major player, as more of a main course than a side, suddenly they merit more attention and creativity. For example, instead of serving a plate of steamed green beans, you can sauté the beans with ginger and garlic or toss them with a Dijon vinaigrette and garnish them with herbs and nuts. Or you can add a variety of spices and fresh herbs to a simple medley of roasted vegetables, as in the recipe opposite.

The other half of the plate

Moving the meat to a supporting role doesn't mean it's less important. Protein is essential to life and well-being—we just don't need it dominating our dinner. Three to four ounces of red meat, fish, or poultry more than covers our protein needs. And don't forget that beans and tofu contain protein, too.



"By dedicating half of the plate to colorful vegetables, one quarter to lean protein, and the other quarter to whole grains, you can put together a balanced meal," says Ellie.

As for the last quarter of the plate, go for whole grains—they've gone from hippy to hip in just a few years. And that's a good thing, because whole grains-from brown rice and whole-wheat pasta to quinoa, bulgur, and barley—have the fiber and antioxidants you need but don't spike your blood sugar the way refined grains do.

This meal is an example of how you can rejigger your plate proportions without leaving your comfort zone. It has all the elements of a traditional dinner: succulent roast pork, rice studded with raisins and walnuts, and subtly spiced roasted vegetables. Only here the rice is whole grain, the pork is lean tenderloin and takes up only a quarter of the plate, and the colorful vegetables claim prime plate real estate. Geometry has never been so much fun.

Good to Know

- 1. The classic American dinner plate is more of a health liability than an asset: too much high-fat meat and too few vegetables.
- 2. For a more balanced meal, rethink your plate by dedicating half of the real estate to vegetables.
- 3. Think of vegetables as a main, not a side—you'll be inspired to cook them in more interesting ways.



sweet and spicy roasted vegetables

Serves 4

- 5 medium carrots, halved lengthwise, and cut into 1-inch pieces (about 1½ cups)
- 2 small red onions, each cut into 8 wedges (trim the root end but leave intact to hold layers together)
- 2 medium red bell peppers, seeded and cut into 1½-inch pieces (about 3 cups)
- 1½ lb. butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch pieces (about 3 cups)
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
 Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
- 14 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne

- 1 Tbs. honey
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme

Position a rack in the center of the oven, put a rimmed baking sheet on the rack, and heat the oven to 450°F.

In a large bowl, toss the carrots, onions, bell peppers, and squash with 1 Tbs. of the oil and a pinch of salt and pepper. Spread the vegetables on the hot baking sheet in a single layer and roast until tender, 30 to 35 minutes. Heat the remaining 1 Tbs. oil in an 8-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the spices and cook until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the honey and thyme and a pinch of salt and pepper.

Drizzle the spice mixture over the roasted vegetables and toss to coat. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

brown rice with walnuts and golden raisins

Serves 4

- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 small yellow onion, finely diced
- ½ cup brown rice Kosher salt
- 2 Tbs. golden raisins
- 14 cup walnuts, toasted and finely chopped
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley Freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil in a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, 2 minutes. Add the rice and stir to coat in the oil. Add 1½ cups water and ½ tsp. salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook until all the water is absorbed and the rice is tender, about 35 minutes. Remove from the heat and let sit for 5 minutes before fluffing with a fork.

Meanwhile, put the raisins in a small bowl and add enough boiling water to cover. Allow them

Stir the raisins, walnuts, and parsley into the cooked rice and season to taste with salt and pepper

coriander-crusted pork tenderloin

to plump for 10 minutes; then drain.

Serves 4

- 1 1- to 11/4-lb. pork tenderloin, trimmed
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbs. coriander seeds, crushed
- 1 tsp. black peppercorns, crushed
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 Tbs. olive oil

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Spread the mustard evenly over the pork and then sprinkle with the coriander, peppercorns, and salt, pressing so the spices adhere. Heat the oil in a 12-inch ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the pork, turning it with tongs, until nicely browned on all sides, about 3 minutes per side. Put the skillet in the oven and roast until an instant-read thermometer in the thick end of the pork registers 155°F, 18 to 20 minutes. Let rest for at least 5 minutes before slicing thinly.

Registered dietitian Ellie Krieger is a Fine Cooking contributing editor.



LEVER STYLE

Lever-style openers may be pricey, but they open bottles in a matter of seconds. Here's how: Set the opener on top of the bottle. Squeeze the handles to hold in place. Then pull the lever down to penetrate the cork and up to extract it.

Quick tips: Avoid using these openers on synthetic corks, because they can damage the worm. (Many models, however, come with a replacement worm, and replacements can also be purchased separately.) Also, avoid models with plastic gears or limited warranties.

Screwpull LM-200

\$80 at cheftools.com

While there are cheaper models and dressier designs on the market, this classic opener was the one we kept coming back to. Its operation is consistently smooth, and the upper handle's length provides just the right leverage. According to the manufacturer, you can open about 2,000 bottles of wine before the nonstick coating on the worm begins to wear off. This opener is made of a sturdy high-tech nylon composite and has stainless-steel gears. It comes in a box for storage, with a handy foil cutter and a 10-year warranty.

TABLE STYLE

This style is also fittingly referred to as a "continuous turn" opener. Here's how it works: Mount the opener on top of the wine bottle. Turn, turn, and turn some morein the same direction through the entire process. The worm penetrates the cork and, once fully inserted, smoothly pulls it out.

Our guarantee: This type of corkscrew centers the worm every time.

Final Touch Easy-Turn corkscrew W04700

\$30 at winestuff.com

This new-to-the-market opener felt like it was twisting its way through butter, not dense cork. The shaft readily centers on top of the wine bottle and maintains a stable position throughout the opening process. The Canadian manufacturer credits "spring assist technology" for its nearly effortless process. While slightly bulky, it also feels sturdy-unlike one plastic model we tried that fell apart after its second use. To release the cork, turn the wing handle in the opposite direction, and the spring assist ejects the cork. A foil cutter is included.

how we tested

We started by interviewing a dozen wine experts and corkscrew manufacturers. They offered their opinions about which styles of openers they considered most useful, relevant, and worthy of review; these are the styles you see here. We then gathered product samples-29 in all-and proceeded to open lots of wine (yes, we do call this a job), assessing how straightforward and easy the wine openers were to operate.



Avoid any opener that has an auger-style worm or screw, which looks like a nail with a blade that coils around it. This style of worm shreds your cork. The best worms are shaped like a spiral and have a nonstick coating.



WAITER STYLE

You often see restaurant servers and caterers using these "wine keys," as they are also known, to open wine bottles tableside. Lift the levers and worm so the opener looks like a T. Center the worm over the bottle and twist it about twothirds of the way into the cork. Hold the levers against the lip of the bottle and pull the cork up to extract. These openers fit easily in a utensil drawer (or pocket), are all-in-one toolsa foil cutter, corkscrew, and bottle opener are attachedand can be bargain priced.

Quick tip: Make sure the worm penetrates straight down into the center of the cork, not at an angle.

Murano waiter's corkscrew \$11 at beveragefactory.com

The curved, serrated foil cutter, set at the top of the opener, comfortably hugs the neck of a wine bottle for smooth foil removal. The double lever comes in handy when opening bottles with stubborn synthetic corks: Use the shorter lever to break the cork's seal and pull the cork up partway, and the longer one to pull it out. The handle's rubber underside is soft, contoured, and slip-resistant, and provides just the right leverage. Other noteworthy features: an iron core that runs the length of the handle for added durability and a nonstick coating on the worm for reduced friction. Available in a variety of colors.

ELECTRIC

These openers couldn't be simpler. Center the opener on top of the bottle and press a button. The worm spirals down into the cork and pulls it out in a matter of seconds. The only strength required is to hold the bottle stable (it wants to spin) with your free hand.

A warning: These openers are a bit noisy, about the level of a power drill or an electric can opener.

Waring Pro cordless wine opener

\$40 at chefscatalog.com

This opener has a sturdy design and a comfortable grip, and it penetrates the cork evenly and without hesitation. The cork removal process takes about 10 seconds. When the rechargeable battery is fully charged, the opener will uncork about 80 bottles of wine. To recharge, set the opener on its stable electric base (which also holds a foil cutter). It comes with a limited five-year motor warranty and a limited one-year appliance warranty.

Maryellen Driscoll is a Fine Cooking contributing editor.



For a video that shows you how to use each style of wine opener, go to FineCooking.com/extras.

Warm as a Toast

Cold outside? Then stay in by the fire and sip a cozy cocktail. BY ADEM TEPEDELEN

ONCE THE NIGHTS TURN CHILLY, a gin and tonic just doesn't have the same appeal. Gray skies and shorter days call for rich, warming drinks, the kind often made with brandy, whiskey or bourbon, or fortified wines like port. That's the thinking behind these cocktails, which make for excellent sipping either before or after a meal. If the mood is celebratory, jump start

the evening with a sparkling version of the Sidecar, this one emboldened with Cognac and cava. Two traditional after-dinner drinks, port and amaretto, come together in the decadent Sweet Ruby, and the classic hot toddy takes a comforting turn with bourbon, honey, and lemon. Add a roaring fire, and you have the recipe for warming up a wintry night.

sparkling sidecar

This festive take on a Sidecar cocktail (which typically contains Cognac, orange liqueur, and lemon juice), features Spanish cava in place of the traditional citrus juice.

Serves 1

- 1 fl. oz. (2 Tbs.) chilled orange liqueur, such as Combier or Cointreau
- ½ fl. oz. (1 Tbs.) Cognac
- 4 fl. oz. (½ cup) chilled cava, such as Segura Viudas Brut Reserva; or as needed Lemon twist, for garnish (see Test Kitchen, p. 99)

Combine the orange

liqueur and Cognac in a coupe or Champagne flute. Top with the cava, squeeze a lemon twist over the glass, drop it in, and serve.





sweet ruby

Ruby port and amaretto liqueur make this a great post-meal warmer: It's sweet, complex, and rich, but very easy to make.

Serves 1

- 1 fl. oz. (2 Tbs.) ruby port, such as Warre's Warrior Special Reserve
- 34 fl. oz. (1½Tbs.) Amaretto di Saronno
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters

Combine the port, amaretto, and bitters in a chilled mixing glass or cocktail shaker. Fill the glass almost to the top with ice. Stir with a long spoon until well combined, about 10 seconds. Strain into a chilled rocks glass over fresh ice and serve.

Adem Tepedelen is an awardwinning beer and spirits writer who lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

bourbon hot toddy

While a hot toddy can't cure a cold or the flu—as it was thought to do when the drink was invented in the late 19th century—it sure can soothe the soul.

Serves 1

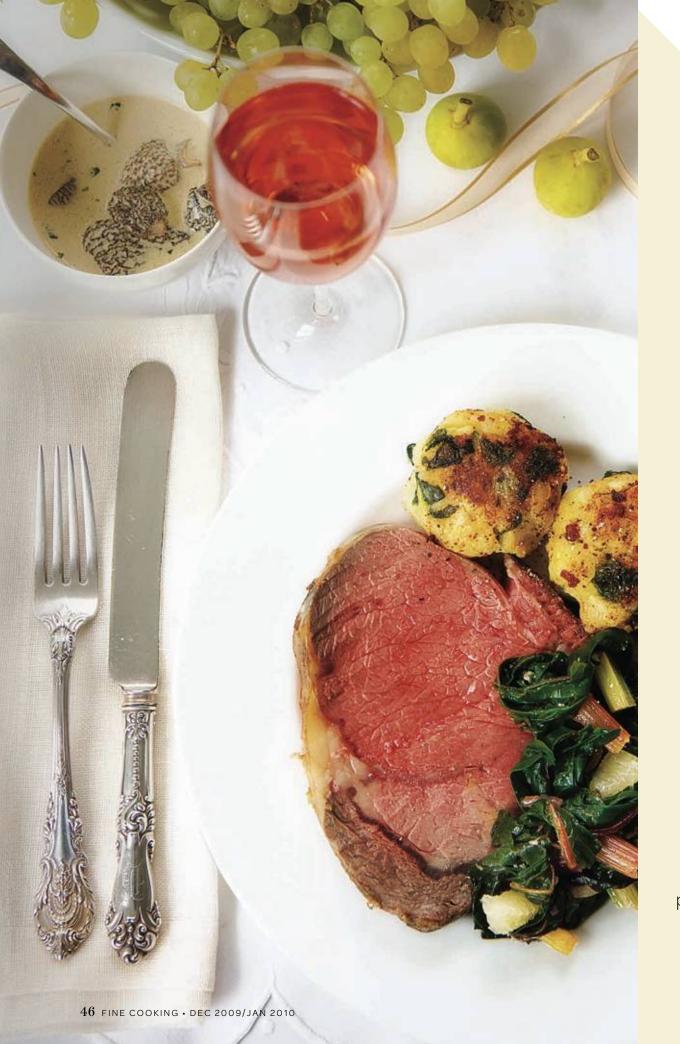
- 21/2 fl. oz. (5 Tbs.) bourbon
 - 1 fl. oz. (2 Tbs.) honey
- 3 small lemon wedges
- 3 whole cloves

Put a kettle of water on the stove to boil.

Put the bourbon and honey in a coffee mug. Squeeze the juice from two wedges of lemon into the mug. With a knife, poke 3 holes in the rind of the remaining lemon wedge and push the cloves into the holes. Pour 4 fl. oz. (½ cup) boiling water into the mug and stir well to dissolve the honey. Add the clove-studded lemon wedge and let steep for a couple of minutes before drinking.



Photographs by Scott Phillips: food styling by Samantha Senevirs

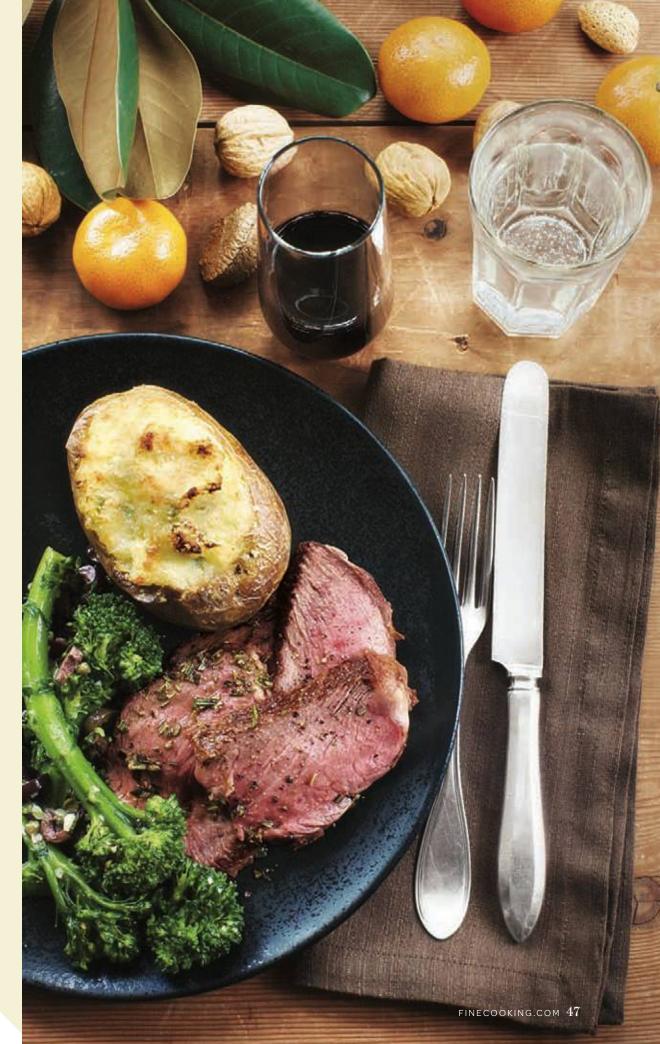


Here's an all-occasion party you can tailor to your taste. Make it elegant, or...

...casual. The choice is yours.

BY BRUCE AIDELLS & NANCY OAKES

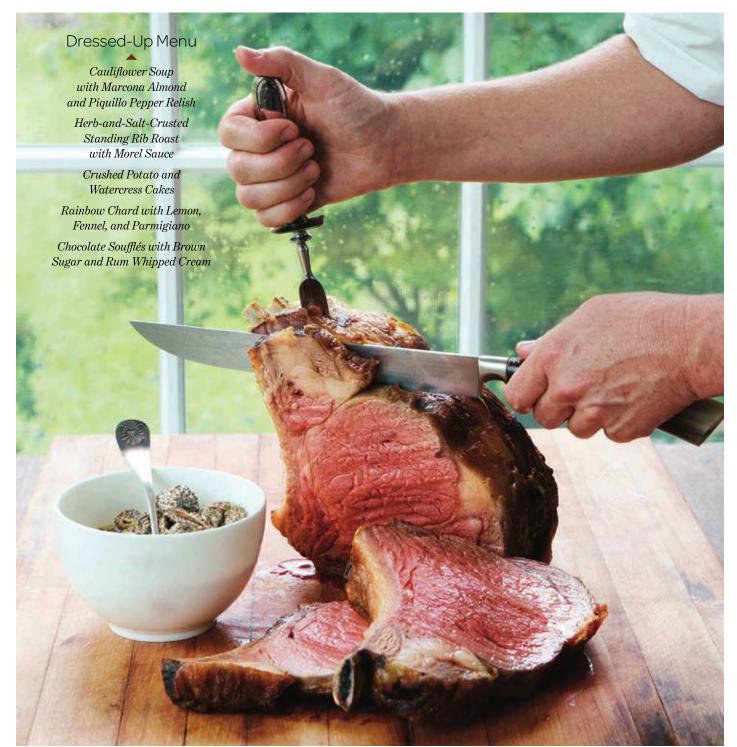
PHOTOGRAPHY AND FOOD STYLING BY HIRSHEIMER & HAMILTON





Standing Rib Roast

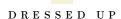
In this story, the same cut of beef—a standing rib roast—is the main course for two holiday meals, one fancy and one laid back. The Dressed-Up menu features the show-stopping whole roast, which practically screams special occasion (and feeds a small crowd). A salt, herb, and flour crust blankets the roast while it cooks, sealing in all the juices and infusing the meat with flavor. The result is tender, perfectly medium-rare beef that's seasoned all the way through. With a creamy sauce of dried morel mushrooms and Marsala wine, it's luxury on a plate.



Rib-Eye Steaks

The Dressed-Down menu stars thick rib-eye steaks (which is what you get when you cut a standing rib roast between its ribs). This recipe is simple to pull off, but it will still make your guests feel special. An easy marinade with fresh rosemary and ground fennel seed boosts the hearty flavor of the steaks, and a quick, hot sear gives them crunchy, caramelized crusts. Don't forget to brush the sliced steaks with a bit of the reserved marinade before serving. Nothing could be simpler, or more delicious.





herb-and-salt-crusted standing rib roast with morel sauce

It's a good idea to order your beef rib roast ahead of time. Ask the butcher to remove the chine bone and fat cap for you. See Test Kitchen, p. 99, for more information about the herb-and-salt crust.

Serves 8 to 10

- 2 cups kosher or sea salt
- 1 large egg white
- 3 Tbs. freshly ground black pepper
- Tbs. chopped fresh thyme (stems included)
- Tbs. chopped juniper berries
- 2 Tbs. chopped garlic
- Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- to 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour; more for rolling
- 3-bone standing beef rib roast (about 7 lb.), cut from the loin end, chine bone and fat cap removed
- 1 Tbs. vegetable oil Morel Sauce (recipe at right)

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine 1 cup water with the salt, egg white, pepper, thyme, juniper, garlic, and parsley. Mix on medium speed until blended. On medium-low speed, mix in 2 cups of the flour, adding more as needed, until the dough is firm and feels slightly dry and stiff, like Play-Doh. Continue to mix for 2 minutes. The dough should be smooth and firm but not sticky; add more flour if necessary. Flatten the dough into a rectangle, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 6 hours.

An hour before you're ready to roast, put the beef on the counter and let sit at room temperature.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add the oil and put the roast meat side down in the skillet; sear until deeply browned, about 5 minutes. Remove the roast from the pan and set it bone side down on a rack in a roasting pan.

On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough into a 1/4-inch-thick rectangle. Drape the dough over the meat, tucking it in on all sides. Roast until an instant-read thermometer in the middle of the roast registers 125°F for rare or 135°F for medium rare, 1¾ to 2¼ hours. Let rest for 20 minutes, then remove and discard the crust. (After removing the crust, the roast can rest for up to 30 minutes more.) Carve and serve with the Morel Sauce.

MOREL SAUCE Yields about 2½ cups

- 2 oz. dried morels, preferably small
- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup finely diced shallots
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- cup dry Marsala
- 2 cups heavy cream Kosher salt
- 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbs. thinly sliced fresh chives
- 1 Tbs. minced fresh tarragon or thyme Freshly ground black pepper

In a small saucepan, bring 2 cups water to a boil over high heat. Off the heat, add the morels, cover, and soak until soft and rehydrated, 30 minutes. Lift them out with a slotted spoon and gently press on them with another spoon to squeeze excess liquid back into the pot. Cut any large ones in half, and set the mushrooms aside. Strain the soaking liquid through a sieve lined with a coffee filter and return it to the (rinsed) saucepan. Over medium-high heat, reduce the soaking liquid to ¼ cup, about 10 minutes.

Melt the butter in a 3-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook, stirring often, until soft and golden brown, 2 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute, then add the morels. Reduce the heat





Covering the seared roast with an herband-salt crust keeps the meat juicy and flavorful; cream adds a luxurious note to the morel sauce.

The Dinner Plan, Dressed Up

1-7 DAYS	5 HOURS	4 HOURS	3 HOURS	1 HOUR	30 MINUTES	BEFORE	BEFORE
AHEAD	AHEAD	AHEAD	AHEAD	AHEAD	AHEAD	DINNER	DESSERT
Make and freeze the chocolate soufflés.	Make the herb-and-salt crust for the beef.	Make the cauliflower soup. Let the rib roast sit out for an hour. Prepare and shape the potato cakes.	Blanch the chard and prepare the remaining ingredients for the chard recipe. Sear the beef, cover it with the dough, and roast.	Make the morel sauce. Make the almond and pepper relish.	Finish the potato cakes.	Reheat the soup. Finish cooking the chard.	Bake the soufflés and make the whipped cream.

to low and cook, stirring often, until heated through, about 2 minutes. Add the Marsala and increase the heat to bring to a simmer. Cook until the mixture begins to dry out, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the reduced soaking liquid, cream, and ½ tsp. salt. Simmer until the sauce thickens slightly, about 10 minutes. Add the lemon juice and herbs, and season to taste with salt and pepper. (You can keep the sauce warm for up to 30 minutes before serving.)

What to Drink

For the Dressed-Up menu, consider beginning the meal with a sparkling rosé. The estate grown and bottled Catalonian Raventós i Blanc L'Hereu de Nit Reserva Rosé 2006 (\$16) has a delicate salmon hue, tiny bubbles, and the flavors of soft, ripe tart fruits.

Then move on to another Spanish wine, this time a white with floral tones and deep body to pair with the rich beef and morel sauce, such as the Cellers Unió Roureda Llicorella Blanc 2005 (\$36) from the Priorat region.

For the Dressed-Down menu, a dry, fizzy red like the Ermete Medici Concerto Lambrusco 2007 (\$24) is a perfect match. It tastes of dark, juicy, dry fruits with a refreshing blast of minerality, an ideal match for the rib-eye steaks.

Another great option is a wine made from the Gamay grape, like the Morgon Cru Beaujolais Côte du Py 2007 from Jean Foillard (\$32). It's a delicate red wine with bright red fruits and a velvety texture.



For a festive drink to go with either of these menus, see the Minty Lemon Drop Cocktails at FineCooking.com/extras.

rib-eye steaks marinated with fennel and rosemary

For great steak, start with a well-marbled piece of meat. If you'd rather not cut the roast into steaks yourself, ask your butcher to do it.

Serves 8

- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 14 cup chopped fresh rosemary
- 4 tsp. ground fennel seed
 Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 2-bone standing beef rib roast (about 5 lb.), chine bone and fat cap removed, cut between the bones into 2 rib-eye steaks

Combine the oil, rosemary, fennel seed, 1 tsp. salt, and 1 tsp. pepper in a small bowl. Set about 6 Tbs. of the marinade aside.

Put the steaks in two shallow baking pans. Pour the remaining marinade over the steaks. Cover and marinate at room temperature for 2 hours, turning every 30 minutes.

Heat the oven to 425°F. Remove the steaks from the marinade, scrape off the herbs, and pat dry with paper towels. Season each steak with ½ tsp. each salt and pepper. Heat two 12-inch ovenproof skillets (preferably cast iron) over high heat until hot. Turn your exhaust fan on high. Cook the steaks, undisturbed, until a deep brown crust has formed, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip the steaks and brown the other side, 3 to 4 minutes more. (Alternatively, heat one skillet, sear one steak at a time, and transfer to a baking sheet for roasting.)

Put the skillets in the oven and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into a thick part of the steaks registers 115°F to 120°F for rare, or 125°F to 130°F for medium rare, about 20 minutes for rare and about 25 minutes for medium rare. Transfer the steaks to a large cutting board, tent them loosely with foil, and let them rest for at least 10 minutes, To serve, carve the meat from the bone and then cut the meat across the grain into ½-inch-thick slices. Brush the sliced meat with the reserved marinade and serve.





A hot sear gives the steaks deliciously crunchy crusts; to carve, cut the steak from the bone, then slice against the grain.

The Dinner Plan, Dressed Down

3 DAYS	1 DAY	4 HOURS	3 HOURS	1 HOUR	30 MINUTES	BEFORE	BEFORE
AHEAD	AHEAD	AHEAD	AHEAD	AHEAD	AHEAD	DINNER	DESSERT
Make the blue cheese dressing.	Bake the potatoes, make the filling, and fill the potatoes. Blanch the broccolini.	Make the gingerbread cake. Poach the pears.	Marinate the steaks, turning them every half hour. Prepare the remaining broccolini ingredients.	Cook the steaks; let rest for at least 10 minutes before carving.	Reheat the potatoes.	Finish the broccolini. Plate and dress the iceberg wedge salads. Carve the steaks and brush with marinade.	Make the whipped cream.



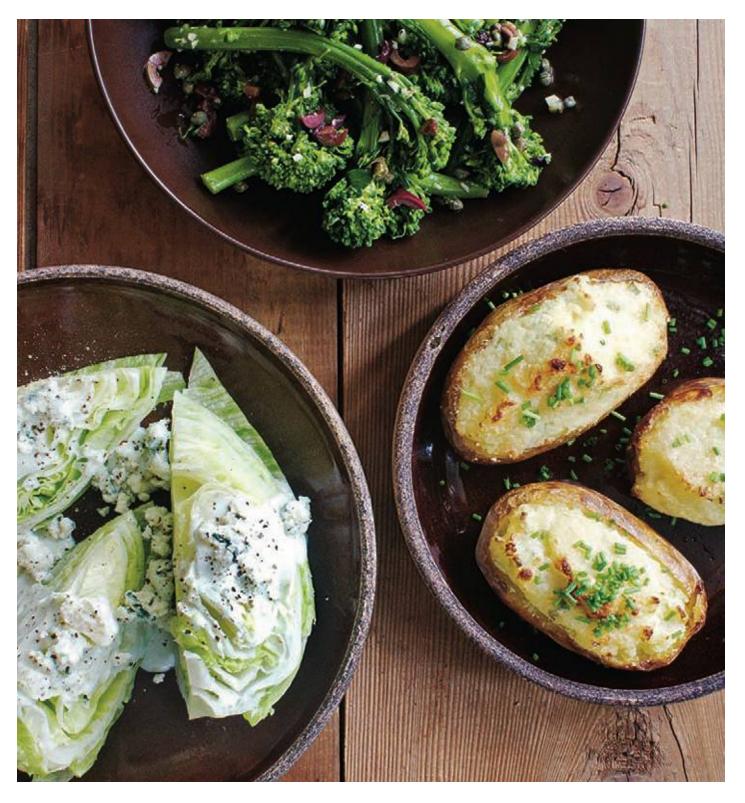
Starter & Sides

Winter vegetables at their best: A silky puréed cauliflower soup gets bold flavor from a crunchy, tangy relish. Rainbow chard and fennel come together with delicate segments of fresh lemon and shavings of nutty Parmigiano-Reggiano. And Yukon Gold potatoes and watercress become buttery little cakes. Easy recipes, sophisticated results.



Starter & Sides

This menu's starter goes retro with crunchy iceberg lettuce wedges and a thick, creamy blue cheese dressing. What's the ideal side dish with a salad and steak? Cheesy twice-baked potatoes, of course. Mildly bitter broccolini with briny olives and capers comes together in less than 20 minutes and rounds out the plate beautifully.





cauliflower soup with marcona almond and piquillo pepper relish

If you can find it, use orange cauliflower; it won't change the soup's flavor but will give it a lovely golden color.

Serves 8

Kosher salt

- 1¾ lb. (6 to 7 cups) cauliflower florets (from 1 medium head)
- 4 Tbs. unsalted butter Freshly ground black pepper
- cup Marcona or regular almonds (roasted and salted), finely chopped
- 1/4 cup jarred piquillo peppers (see Test Kitchen, p. 99, for more information) or roasted red peppers, rinsed, seeded, and finely diced
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- Tbs. thinly sliced fresh mint
- 1 medium clove garlic, minced
- ½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

Bring 6 cups water to a boil in a 4-quart pot over high heat. Add 1 tsp. salt, then add the cauliflower and boil until very tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Drain the cauliflower in a colander set over a large bowl to catch the cooking liquid and let the cauliflower cool slightly. Working in 2 batches, purée each batch of

cauliflower with 2 cups of the cooking liquid and 2 Tbs. of the butter in a blender until very smooth. Season to taste with salt. (The soup can be made up to 4 hours ahead.)

In a small bowl, combine the almonds, peppers, oil, mint, garlic, and pepper flakes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. (The relish can be made up to 1 hour ahead.)

When ready to serve, gently reheat the soup over medium-low heat. Garnish each serving with a spoonful of the almond relish.

crushed potato and watercress cakes

Yukon Gold potatoes bring extra buttery flavor to these cakes, and their waxy texture (as opposed to a russet's floury texture) helps hold the cakes together.

Serves 8

- 11/4 to 11/2 lb. medium Yukon Gold potatoes Kosher salt
- 5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more for the baking sheet

- 1 large yellow onion, cut into 1/4-inch dice
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 lb. watercress, stemmed
- 1/2 cup mascarpone Freshly ground black pepper

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F.

Scrub the potatoes and pat them dry. Put them on a baking sheet and lightly sprinkle with salt. Bake until tender when poked with a skewer, 40 to 50 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside until cool enough to handle.

While the potatoes are cooling, heat 2 Tbs. of the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and a pinch of salt and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute, then add the watercress. Season to taste with salt and pepper and cook, stirring, just until the watercress wilts, 1 to 2 minutes.

Put the potatoes in a large bowl and break them into small chunks with a spoon. Add the watercress mixture and the mascarpone, mix to combine, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide and shape the potato mixture into 16 equal patties, about 2 inches in diameter and 1/2 inch thick. (The cakes can be made to this point up to 4 hours ahead and refrigerated.)

Heat the oven to 200°F. Lightly oil a rimmed baking sheet. Heat the remaining 3 Tbs. olive oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Working in 2 batches, cook the potato cakes until golden on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer each batch to the baking sheet, season lightly with salt, and keep warm in the oven for up to 30 minutes before serving.

rainbow chard with lemon, fennel, and parmigiano

Don't throw those chard stems away cooking them with the chard leaves gives this recipe lots of extra flavor and texture.

Serves 8

- 4 large bunches rainbow or Swiss chard (about 3½ lb.) Kosher salt
- cups thinly sliced fennel bulb, plus 1/2 cup chopped fronds (fronds optional)
- 2 medium lemons
- Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil



Tangy, crunchy, and salty all at once, this pepper and almond relish brings creamy cauliflower soup to life.

- 6 medium cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced
 - Freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup freshly shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano (shave with a vegetable peeler)

Cut the chard stalks off just below each leaf and thinly slice the stalks. Chop the chard leaves into large pieces. Keep the stalks and leaves separate.

Bring a large, wide pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the sliced fennel and chard stalks and cook for 3 minutes. Add the chard leaves and cook until tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain well in a colander. (The chard can be cooked to this point up to 3 hours ahead.) Rinse and dry the pot.

Finely grate the zest from the lemons and set aside. Cut the top and bottom ends off the lemons, then stand each on a cut end and slice off the peel to expose the flesh. (Try to remove all of the bitter white pith.) Cut the lemon segments from the membranes, letting them drop into a small bowl.

Heat the oil and garlic in the pot over medium heat. When the garlic begins to sizzle, add the fennel fronds (if using) and the lemon segments and cook, stirring often, for 1 minute. Add the chard leaves and stems and fennel and cook, stirring, until heated through. Stir in the lemon zest and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve, sprinkled with the Parmigiano.





Scooping the baked potato flesh while it's still hot helps the butter and cheese melt easily into the filling.

iceberg wedges with blue cheese buttermilk dressing

With a food processor, you can easily make your own blue cheese dressing. Be sure to use the best blue cheese you can find (Salemville Amish Blue is good, as is Maytag Blue).

Serves 8

- 34 lb. blue cheese, coarsely chopped
- 2 scallions, white and light-green parts only, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 Tbs. red wine vinegar Freshly ground black pepper
- 2/3 cup buttermilk; more as needed
- 2 small heads iceberg lettuce, quartered and cored

Crumble 1 cup of the blue cheese and set it aside as a garnish.

Set up a food processor and, with the motor running, drop the scallions through the feed tube. After 10 seconds, shut off the machine and scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the remaining chopped blue cheese and

pulse a few times to chop it further. Stop the motor and add the mayonnaise, vinegar, and 2 tsp. black pepper. With the motor running, add the buttermilk. Check the texture; if it is too thick, add more buttermilk to produce a thick and creamy, but pourable, dressing. (The dressing may be prepared up to 3 days ahead; store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.)

To assemble the salad, lay the iceberg wedges cut side up on 8 salad plates. Spoon about ¼ cup of the dressing over each, then sprinkle each with some of the reserved blue cheese and a few grinds of black pepper. Leftover dressing will keep for 1 week in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

twice-baked potatoes with sour cream

These potatoes are stuffed with sour cream, butter, and cheese, but the secret ingredient isn't dairy—it's a splash of balsamic vinegar, which gives the filling a sweet-tangy note.

Serves 8

- 8 large Yukon Gold or medium russet potatoes (about 8 oz. each), scrubbed and dried
- 6 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1 cup thinly sliced chives or scallions
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 4 tsp. good-quality balsamic vinegar
 Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F. Put the potatoes on the oven rack and bake for 30 minutes. Prick each potato on all sides with a fork. Continue to bake until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, about 15 minutes more. Carefully remove the potatoes from the oven. While the potatoes are still hot, hold each one with a clean kitchen towel and cut off about one-quarter lengthwise from the

one with a clean kitchen towel and cut off about one-quarter lengthwise from the top. With a spoon, gently scoop the potato flesh into a large bowl, leaving enough flesh attached to the skin that it holds its shape. Scrape any flesh from the tops and discard the skin (or eat it as a snack).

With a fork, mash 4 Tbs. of the butter into the potatoes until melted. Add the sour cream, chives or scallions, ¾ cup of the cheese, and the vinegar. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Don't overmix—it's fine if the mixture has a few lumps.

Spoon the filling into the reserved potato shells, mounding it nicely and making sure the filled shells are resting upright. (The potatoes may be prepared to this point up to 1 day ahead; wrap each in plastic and refrigerate.)

When ready to serve, arrange the potatoes on a baking sheet or in a baking dish. Cut the remaining 2 Tbs. of butter into small pieces and dot the potatoes with the butter. Sprinkle the potatoes with the remaining cheese. Bake at 425°F until heated through and starting to brown on the top, 20 to 25 minutes. (If baking straight from the refrigerator, allow an additional 10 to 15 minutes for the potatoes to heat through.)

broccolini with olives and capers

Broccolini is a more delicate version of its larger cousin, broccoli (which is just fine to use in this recipe if you can't find broccolini). The entire stalk is edible, and there's no need to trim it.

Serves 8

Kosher salt

- 4 medium bunches broccolini (2 to 21/2 lb.)
- 6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- 2 Tbs. chopped pitted kalamata olives
- 2 Tbs. chopped capers (rinse only if salt-packed)

Freshly ground black pepper

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the broccolini and stir to separate the stems. When the water returns to a boil, adjust the heat to a simmer and cook until crisp tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Drain well. (The broccolini may be prepared to this point up to 1 day ahead and refrigerated.)

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook until softened, about 1 minute, taking care not to let it get any color. Add the olives and capers and cook for 1 minute more. Add the broccolini and toss to coat. If the broccolini was cooked ahead, keep tossing until heated through. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and serve.





chocolate soufflés with brown sugar and rum whipped cream

The anxiety of making soufflés is gone forever with this freezer-to-oven recipe. The whipped cream is delicious, but you can also serve pieces of English toffee and fresh, dried, or candied fruit with the soufflés so your guests can garnish as they please.

Serves 8

FOR THE SOUFFLES

- ½ oz. (1 Tbs.) unsalted butter, melted
- 1/2 cup plus 2 Tbs. granulated sugar
- ½ cup plus 1 Tbs. whole milk
- oz. bittersweet chocolate, preferably 64% cacao, chopped
- 6 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 4 large egg yolks

FOR THE CREAM

- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 Tbs. light brown or demerara sugar
- 1 Tbs. dark rum
- 14 tsp. pure vanilla extract

MAKE THE SOUFFLES

Brush eight 6-oz. straight-sided ramekins with the butter and coat evenly with 2 Tbs. of the sugar, tapping out the excess. Set aside.

In a 2- to 3-quart saucepan, heat the milk over medium-high heat until steaming hot. Add the chocolate and stir with a rubber spatula until melted. Transfer the chocolate mixture to a large bowl and set aside.

Combine the remaining ½ cup sugar and 2 Tbs. water in a 2-quart saucepan and set over medium heat, stirring frequently, until the sugar is completely dissolved. Let sit at room temperature while you whip the

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip the whites on medium speed until soft peaks form, about 3 minutes. With the mixer running, slowly pour the sugar syrup down the side of the bowl into the whites. Increase the speed to high and beat until the whites hold medium peaks, about 1½ minutes.

Mix the egg volks into the melted chocolate until combined. Fold one-third of the whites into the chocolate mixture until totally

combined. Add the remaining two-thirds of the whites and fold until no streaks remain. Divide the batter evenly among the prepared ramekins. Freeze until solid, at least 8 hours ahead, then wrap tightly with plastic wrap. (The soufflés may be made to this point up to 1 week ahead.)

BAKE THE SOUFFLES

When ready to serve, position a rack in the top third of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Remove the ramekins from the freezer and bake until the tops are puffed and cracked (either at the edges or on top) and the soufflés are barely set in the middle, 18 to 20 minutes.

MAKE THE WHIPPED CREAM

While the soufflés are baking, in a medium bowl, whip the cream using a hand mixer on medium speed until thickened enough to hold very soft peaks. Add the brown sugar, rum, and vanilla and continue to mix until soft peaks form.

Serve the soufflés, topped with dollops of whipped cream, immediately after baking.



gingerbread cake with root-beer-poached pears

Root beer's aromatic, spicy sweetness makes it a great poaching liquid for pears. Serve both the gingerbread cake and the pears warm or at room temperature.

Serves 8 (with leftover cake)

FOR THE GINGERBREAD

- ½ oz. (1 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
- 2 Tbs. granulated sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup unsulfured molasses
- 3 large eggs
- 9 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 34 tsp. table salt
- 134 cups packed dark brown sugar
 - 1 cup root beer, preferably an artisanal brand

FOR THE PEARS

- 4 firm-ripe Bosc pears, peeled, halved, and cored
- 4 12-fl.-oz. bottles root beer, preferably an artisanal brand
 - Freshly grated zest of 2 medium lemons

FOR SERVING

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 Tbs. confectioners' sugar

MAKE THE GINGERBREAD

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Coat an 8-inch square cake pan with the butter and lightly dust with the granulated sugar. In a small bowl, stir the oil, molasses, and eggs until combined. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, baking soda, ginger, cinnamon, and salt.

In a small pot, bring the brown sugar and root beer to a boil. Meanwhile, add the molasses mixture to the flour and stir to combine. Add the hot root beer mixture and quickly beat until combined. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean, 35 to 45 minutes. Let cool in the pan on a wire rack until warm, about 40 minutes. Invert the pan to remove the cake and turn the cake right side up. (The cake may be prepared up to 4 hours ahead.)

POACH THE PEARS

In a medium saucepan, combine the pears, root beer, and lemon zest. Bring the mixture

to a slow simmer over medium-low heat and cook until the pears are tender, 20 to 30 minutes. With a slotted spoon, carefully transfer the pears to a plate. Bring the poaching liquid to a boil and boil until reduced to a syrup, about 15 minutes (watch carefully towards the end because it can burn quickly); you should have about ¾ cup. (The pears and syrup may be prepared up to 4 hours ahead. If the syrup thickens, reheat before serving.)

TO SERVE

In a chilled medium bowl, beat the cream and sugar with a hand mixer until soft peaks form, about 3 minutes. Cut the gingerbread into 8 pieces of whatever size you choose and place one on each of 8 plates. Arrange a pear half against each piece of gingerbread and drizzle each with the syrup. Top with a dollop of whipped cream and serve.

Bruce Aidells is a chef and cookbook author.

Nancy Oakes is the chef at Boulevard restaurant in San Francisco. They have been married (to each other) for 20 years.

For sources, see Where to Buy It





IT'S TRUE THAT I NO LONGER lie in bed on Christmas Eve straining to hear reindeer on the roof, but that doesn't mean I have given up on the magic of Christmas. I've just transferred my fantasies from the prospect of new toys to a more grown-up enchantment: the promise of Christmas dinner. So while my practical friends are dutifully taking care of their shopping, I am dreaming up a special meal. To me, that often means a roast bird—especially goose, duck, and even game hens.

The rich, all-dark, almost beefy taste of goose makes it perfect holiday fare (plus, who can resist the lure of a traditional Dickensian Christmas?). Whole duck is delicious brushed with a flavorful glaze during the last minutes of roasting. And halved Cornish game hens are ideal individual servings for an elegant meal. In the following pages you'll find not only amazing recipes but also the best techniques for roasting each bird to perfection. Pair any one of them with your favorite sides, and you'll create some holiday magic of your own.



roasted ducks with tangerine-hoisin glaze

Rubbing the ducks with a mix of garlic, tangerine zest, five-spice powder, and coriander and then refrigerating for a day or two adds flavor and helps the skin crisp during roasting. **Serves 8**

FOR THE DUCKS

- 4 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 4 tsp. finely grated tangerine zest
- 21/2 tsp. coriander seed
- 2½ tsp. five-spice powder
 Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper
- 2 Pekin (Long Island) ducks (5 to 6 lb. each), giblets discarded

FOR THE GLAZE

- 3 Tbs. hoisin sauce
- 2 Tbs. orange liqueur, such as Grand Marnier or Triple Sec
- 1 Tbs. honey
- 1 Tbs. fresh tangerine juice
- 1 tsp. Asian sesame oil

SEASON THE DUCKS

In a mortar or spice grinder, grind the garlic, tangerine zest, coriander, five-spice, 2 Tbs. salt, and 1 tsp. pepper to a coarse paste.

Make 20 to 30 small slits in the skin of each duck, using a sharp paring knife held parallel to the duck surface so that you pierce the skin and fat but not the meat. Be sure to make slits on the backs and thighs as well as the breasts. Rub about two-thirds of the spice mixture into the duck cavities and then rub the remaining all over the skin. Set the ducks on a rack over a large rimmed baking sheet and allow to air dry uncovered in the refrigerator for 24 to 36 hours.

ROAST THE DUCKS

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Let the ducks sit at room temperature as the oven heats. Arrange the ducks breast down on two small V-racks in a large roasting pan and roast for 1¼ hours. Remove the pan from the oven and spoon or pour off most of the fat from the roasting pan-use a turkey baster if you have one. Flip the ducks, using sturdy tongs inserted in the cavities, and pierce the skin again all over with a knife. Continue roasting the ducks until the meat around the thighs feels tender when prodded (a skewer should penetrate the thigh with no resistance), the legs feel loose in their joints, and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the thigh near the joint reads 175°F, 45 to 60 minutes more.

GLAZE THE DUCKS

Remove the ducks from the oven, and increase the oven temperature to 500°F. In a small bowl, whisk the hoisin, orange liqueur, honey, tangerine juice, and sesame oil.

Transfer the ducks (on the racks) to a rimmed baking sheet. With a brush, paint the breasts and legs with a thin layer of glaze and return to the oven. Paint again after 5 minutes and continue roasting until mahogany-color, 3 to 5 minutes more.

Let the ducks rest for 5 to 10 minutes before carving

TO DRINK: A good match for the rich duck is a bright and acidic Riesling, like the Weingut Münzberg Riesling Kabinett 2007 (\$20). It's well balanced with sweet, juicy fruit and perfect acidity on the finish. Hints of pear and green apple, too.

THE TECHNIQUE



SLOW-ROASTING

Roasting the duck slowly at a low temperature (breast side down first) is the best way to render the fat from under the breast skin. It's key to remove the rendered fat from the pan partway through roasting, so the duck won't sit in its own fat as it finishes roasting, which would prevent it from crisping.





If you have an oval roaster with a cover (either an old-fashioned speckled enameled one or a newer model), this is an ideal time to use it. If your roaster doesn't have a cover, you can use heavy-duty aluminum foil instead. You'll need to prepare the goose, make the broth, and prepare the bread and prunes a day ahead. Serves 8 to 10

FOR THE GOOSE

1 12- to 14-lb. goose (with giblets) Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE BROTH

- 1 Tbs. peanut or vegetable oil
- medium yellow onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 medium carrot, coarsely chopped
- 1 medium celery stalk, coarsely chopped
- 2 fresh thyme sprigs
- dried bay leaf Kosher salt

FOR THE STUFFING

- 1 cup prunes, chopped into 1/3-inch pieces
- 2 Tbs. brandy
- cups lightly packed 34-inch bread cubes (from a loaf of French or Italian bread)
- cups chopped celery, including leaves (about 4 stalks)
- 134 cups chopped yellow onion (1 large)
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbs. fresh thyme leaves, lightly chopped
- ½ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tsp. finely grated orange zest
- 1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

- 34 cup dry red wine, such as Cabernet Sauvignon or Shiraz/Syrah
- 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbs. currant or plum jelly Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

PREPARE THE GOOSE

Pull the giblets out of the cavity. Refrigerate the liver for use in the stuffing and set the other giblets aside for the broth. Tear off any loose deposits of fat from inside the cavity openings. With a chef's knife, cut off and reserve the two long outermost sections of each wing, leaving only the section nearest the breast still attached. Next, with a paring knife, prick holes in the skin around the thighs, being careful not to cut into the meat. Finally, season the goose generously inside and out with salt and pepper. Set on a rack on a baking sheet and refrigerate, uncovered, overnight.

MAKE THE BROTH AND START THE STUFFING

Using a cleaver, chop the neck and wings into 4-inch sections. Pat dry with paper towels. Heat the oil in a 5-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the neck, wings, and giblets (excluding the liver). Cook, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides, 10 to 15 minutes. Add the onion, carrot, celery, thyme, and bay leaf and stir. Add 1 quart water and a small pinch of salt and bring to a boil. Immediately reduce the heat to medium low and simmer gently for 2 hours. Strain, discarding the solids, and cool to room temperature before refrigerating. You should have 11/3 to 13/4 cups broth.

Combine the prunes and brandy for the stuffing in a small bowl, cover, and steep overnight. Arrange the bread cubes for the stuffing on a baking sheet and set aside, uncovered, to dry overnight.

STEAM THE GOOSE

Put the goose breast side up on a V-rack in a large flameproof roasting pan with sides at least 3 inches high. Set the pan on the top of the stove over the largest burner and add about 1 inch of water. Cover the roasting pan tightly with heavy-duty foil (or with the domed lid if using a covered roaster). Bring to a boil and lower the heat so the water just simmers. Steam the goose for 40 minutes. Check the liquid occasionally to make sure it hasn't evaporated and add hot water if necessary. Turn off the heat and uncover the pan, being careful of the steam. Remove the goose and rack from the pan and set aside for 20 to 30 minutes until cool enough to handle.

MAKE THE STUFFING AND ROAST THE GOOSE

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Spoon 2 Tbs. rendered goose fat from the steaming liquid in the roasting pan (reserving the rest) and put it in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the goose liver and sauté, turning a few times, until it browns and feels springy, about 6 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board to cool. Return the skillet to medium heat and add the celery, onion, garlic, thyme, and ½ tsp. each salt and pepper. Stir, cover, and reduce the heat to medium low. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft, 10 to 12 minutes.

Transfer the vegetables to a large mixing bowl. Stir in the bread cubes, soaked prunes, parsley, orange and lemon zests, and ½ tsp. salt. Chop the liver and add it to the bowl. Check the goose for pinfeathers or quillsthese are most often found around the legs. Remove any with strong tweezers or pliers. Using a large spoon, loosely fill the large cavity of the goose with stuffing. If there is any leftover stuffing, use it to fill the smaller neck cavity.

Pour the steaming liquid from the roasting pan into a clean vessel and leave at room temperature until cool. When the liquid and fat are cool enough to handle, spoon the fat off, set aside 2 Tbs. for the gravy, and reserve the rest for cooking (see Test Kitchen, p. 99); discard the water.

Return the roasting rack and goose to the roasting pan. Roast for 1½ hours and then rotate the pan for even cooking. Continue roasting until the meat on the drumsticks feels very soft when pressed, 1/2 to 1 hour more. You can also check that the thigh (near the joint) is 175°F to 180°F and that the stuffing is at least 165°F. Remove the goose from the oven.

Set the goose in a draft-free spot to rest for 20 to 45 minutes. If the kitchen is cool, tent the bird loosely with foil.





roasted cornish game hens with cranberry-port sauce

This is a great dish for company because much of the work, from preparing the hens to making the broth for the sauce, can be done a day ahead.

Serves 8

FOR THE HENS

- 4 Cornish game hens (11/2 to 2 lb. each)
- 4 tsp. finely chopped fresh sage (stems reserved for the broth)
- 4 tsp. chopped fresh thyme (stems reserved for the broth)
 - Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter

FOR THE BROTH

- 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups lower-salt chicken broth
- 1/3 cup chopped shallot

FOR THE SAUCE

- ⅓ cup ruby port
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1 Tbs. minced shallot
- Tbs. all-purpose flour
 Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

PREPARE THE HENS

Using poultry shears, remove the backbones from the hens by cutting along both sides. Set each hen breast side up on a cutting board and flatten by pressing down on the breastbone with your palms. With a chef's knife, split each hen in two along the breastbone. Extend the wings on each side and chop off the last two joints. Discard any large deposits of fat. Chop or break each backbone into 2 pieces and set aside with the wing tips. In a small bowl, combine the sage and thyme with 1 Tbs. salt and 1 tsp. pepper. Pat the hens dry and rub the herb mixture on both sides of each hen. Arrange the hens skin side up on a rimmed baking sheet so they aren't touching and refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 12 hours or overnight.

MAKE THE BROTH AND START THE SAUCE

Pat the reserved wings and back bones dry. Heat the oil over medium-high heat in a 3- to 4-quart saucepan. Add the wings and back bones and cook, stirring a few times, until browned on all sides, about 8 minutes. Add the chicken broth, chopped shallot, and reserved sage and thyme stems. Simmer gently, adjusting the heat as needed, for 30 minutes. Strain, discarding the solids. Cool the broth and refrigerate overnight.

Combine the port and cranberries for the sauce in a small bowl, cover, and let sit overnight.

ROAST THE HENS

An hour before roasting, remove the hens from the refrigerator and let sit at room temperature. Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Melt the 1 Tbs. butter and brush it lightly over the hens. Roast, rotating the pan about halfway though, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a thigh reads 175°F to 180°F, about 30 minutes. Let rest at least 5 minutes before serving.

MAKE THE SAUCE

While the hens roast, skim the fat from the broth and heat the broth in a small saucepan. Heat the 1 Tbs. butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the minced shallot and cook, stirring occasionally, until the shallot is tender, about 2 minutes. Stir in the flour and cook, whisking gently, until it forms a thick paste, about 30 seconds. Strain the port through a fine sieve into the saucepan, reserving the cranberries (don't press down on the berries). Whisk for about 30 seconds. Slowly whisk in the broth until the sauce is smooth, adjusting the heat to maintain a steady simmer. Simmer, whisking occasionally, until reduced by about one-third, 5 to 8 minutes. Stir in the reserved cranberries. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep warm.

Just before serving, pour any accumulated juices from the hens into the sauce. Serve the hens drizzled with the sauce.

TO DRINK: Fleur Vineyards Petite Sirah 2007 (\$16) from the north coast of California has exceptionally dark red fruits and soft, delicate tannins, a perfect balance for this dish.

THE TECHNIQUE



DRY-BRINING AND SPLITTING

A dry brine of salt, pepper, and fresh herbs combined with air drying the hens in the fridge overnight helps crisp the skin during roasting.

Splitting the hens in half before roasting is convenient for serving (half a hen makes a perfect single portion) but also has benefits for the cook: It's neater and eliminates any need for tableside carving; the split hens roast more quickly and evenly; and best of all, it leaves you with a pot full of backbones and wingtips that become the base for a rich sauce.

The Big Thaw

While Cornish hens and ducks may be available year-round, goose tends to be a wintertime specialty. Even so, many markets only sell these birds frozen, so be sure to allow time for thawing. The best way to thaw poultry is in its original wrapper in the refrigerator. (Put the birds on a rimmed tray in case of any leaks.) Allow three full days for a goose, two days for a duck, and one for a hen

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For sources, see Where to Buy It FINECOOKING.COM $\,65\,$







with a delicate mousse-like texture. Serve with lightly sweetened whipped cream.

Serves 8 to 10

FOR THE CRUST

- 6 oz. (11/3 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for rolling
- oz. (1/2 cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
- 1 tsp. granulated sugar
- ½ tsp. table salt
- 1 large egg yolk, lightly beaten

FOR THE FILLING

- 2 lb. medium parsnips, peeled, cored (see Test Kitchen, p. 99), and cut into large chunks
- 1½ cups buttermilk
- 3/3 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 tsp. table salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
- 14 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp. ground cloves

MAKE THE CRUST

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the flour, butter,

the mixture resembles a coarse meal, about 2 minutes. Mix 2 Tbs. ice-cold water with the egg yolk in a small bowl. With the mixer on low speed, add the yolk mixture and mix until just combined. Transfer the dough to a work surface and bring it together with your hands. Shape it into a 1-inch-thick disk, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Set the dough on a lightly floured surface, sprinkle a little flour over it, and roll it out into a 1/8-inch-thick circle that's about 12 inches in diameter, reflouring the dough and work surface as necessary.

Transfer the dough to a 9-inch pie plate and gently fit it into the pan, lifting the edges and pressing the dough into the corners with your fingers. Trim the edges, leaving a 1/2-inch overhang. Fold the overhanging dough underneath itself and crimp the edges. Prick the dough all over with a fork. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Position a rack in the center of the oven

and heat the oven to 425°F.

Line the dough with foil or parchment, fill with dried beans or pie weights, and bake for 15 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F. Carefully remove the foil

golden, an additional 5 to 8 minutes. Cool completely before filling.

MAKE THE FILLING

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add the parsnips and cook until tender when pierced with a fork, 12 to 15 minutes. Drain the parsnips in a colander and let them steam under a clean kitchen towel for about 5 minutes. Return the parsnips to the pot and mash them with a potato masher, keeping the mixture rather rough. Measure 2 cups of the parsnip mash; save any extra for another use.

Purée the 2 cups of mashed parsnips and the buttermilk in a blender until smooth. Transfer the purée to a mixing bowl. With a whisk, beat in the sugar, eggs, salt, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves, whisking until the sugar dissolves.

BAKE THE PIE

Pour the filling into the piecrust and bake until the top is lightly browned and a toothpick inserted in the center of the filling comes out clean, about 1 hour. Cool on a rack for at least 1 hour. Serve at room temperature.

parsnip, potato, and scallion pancakes

A variation on the classic German potato pancake, these taste great with applesauce and sour cream. Serve with roast pork or beef.

Yields 8 to 10 pancakes; serves 8

- 1 lb. russet potatoes, peeled
- 1 lb. medium parsnips, peeled and cored (see Test Kitchen, p. 99)
- 34 cup thinly sliced scallions (white and green parts)
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Vegetable oil for the griddle



Using a food processor fitted with the medium grating disk, grate the potatoes and parsnips separately. Put the potatoes in a clean kitchen towel and squeeze out as much liquid as possible. In a large bowl, combine the potatoes, parsnips, scallions, eggs, flour, 2 tsp. salt, and a few grinds of pepper and mix well.

Generously oil a griddle and heat over medium heat. Working in batches, spoon about ½ cup of the mixture onto the griddle at a time to form pancakes. Flatten the pancakes with a spatula (they should be about ½ inch thick) and cook until the bottom is well browned and crisped, about 5 minutes. Flip and cook until the other side is well browned, about 5 minutes more. Sprinkle with salt. Serve immediately or keep warm in a low oven until ready to serve.

parsnip and leek soup with cumin and mustard seeds

This soup gets a delicious kick from whole cumin and mustard seeds toasted in hot oil with garlic and stirred in just before serving. This traditional Indian seasoning technique is called *tarka*.

Yields 8 to 9 cups; serves 6 to 8

- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1 large yellow onion, cut into medium dice (2 cups)
 - Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 cups lower-salt chicken broth; more as needed
- 2 medium leeks (white and light-green parts only), trimmed, washed, and sliced crosswise about ½ inch thick (2½ cups)
- 1 lb. medium parsnips, peeled, cored (see Test Kitchen, p. 99), and cut into medium dice (about 2 cups)
 - 1 lb. yellow potatoes (like Yukon Gold), peeled and cut into medium dice (2¾ cups)
 - 2 tsp. ground turmeric
 - ½ tsp. cayenne
 - 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
 - 4 medium cloves garlic, roughly chopped
 - 2 tsp. cumin seed
- 2 tsp. black mustard seed

Heat the butter in a 6- to 8-quart heavyduty pot over medium heat. Add the onion, ½ tsp. salt, and a couple of grinds of pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft and lightly browned, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the broth, leeks, parsnips, and potatoes and raise the heat to medium high. Simmer briskly for 5 minutes and then reduce the heat to low. Add the turmeric and cayenne, stirring well, and simmer slowly until the vegetables are very soft, about 20 minutes.

Working in batches, purée the soup in a blender and then strain it through a medium-mesh sieve. The soup should be about as thick as a thin milk shake; add more broth if it's not thin enough. Return the soup to the pot and season to taste with salt. (The soup can be made up to this point 1 day ahead and refrigerated. Reheat before proceeding.)

Shortly before serving, heat the olive oil in a small skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the garlic, cumin seed, and mustard seed. Stir with a wooden spoon until the seeds begin to pop and the garlic is lightly browned, 30 to 60 seconds. Carefully stir the hot oil and spices into the soup (it may spatter). Season to taste with more salt, pepper, or cayenne.



mashed parsnips with lemon and herbs

This rustic mash is just as rich and satisfying as the best mashed potatoes you've ever had. It's especially good with broiled fish or roast chicken.

Serves 4

Kosher salt

- 2 lb. medium parsnips, peeled, cored (see Test Kitchen, p. 99), and cut into 1½- to 2-inch pieces
- 14 cup crème fraîche
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
 Finely grated zest of 1 small lemon,
 plus 1 Tbs. juice
 Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh chives, mint, parsley, dill, or a mixture



Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the parsnips and cook until tender when pierced with a fork, 12 to 15 minutes. Drain the parsnips in a colander and let them steam under a clean kitchen towel for about 5 minutes.

Return the parsnips to the pot and mash them with a potato masher, keeping them rather rough. Stir in the crème fraîche, butter, lemon zest, and juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer to a warm serving bowl and sprinkle with the chopped herbs.



parsnip risotto with pancetta and sage

Sweet parsnips, salty pancetta, and aromatic sage—does winter food get any better?

Serves 4 to 6

Kosher salt

- 1½ lb. medium parsnips, peeled, cored (see Test Kitchen, p. 99), and cut into medium dice (2½ cups)
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 oz. thinly sliced pancetta, cut into ½-inch-wide strips (about 1 cup)
- 3 Tbs. roughly chopped fresh sage
- 3 medium cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, cut into small dice
- 2 cups arborio rice Pinch of crumbled saffron (optional)
- 6 cups lower-salt chicken broth
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano; more for serving

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the parsnips and boil until firmtender, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain and spread on a rimmed baking sheet to cool to room temperature.

Heat 2 Tbs. of the olive oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add the parsnips, a pinch of salt, and a few grinds of pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and lightly browned, about 4 minutes. Add the pan-

cetta and cook until sizzling and crisp, about 2 minutes. Add the sage and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until the garlic is fragrant and the sage is starting to crisp, about 2 minutes more. Set aside. **Heat the remaining** 2 Tbs. olive oil in an

11- to 12-inch straight-sided sauté pan

over medium-high heat. Add the onion,

a small pinch of salt, and a few grinds of pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the rice, 2 tsp. salt, and the saffron (if using), stirring well to coat. Add 2 cups of the broth and the wine; simmer, stirring, until the liquid is completely absorbed, 3 to 4 minutes. Continue adding the broth in 1 cup increments, stirring and adjusting the heat to maintain a brisk simmer and letting each addition be almost absorbed before adding the next. The risotto is done when the rice is nearly but not fully tender (al dente) and still a little soupy (this usually takes 14 to 16 minutes after the first addition of liquid). You may not use all the broth, but you should use at least 4 cups.

Fold the parsnip mixture into the risotto. Add the butter and Parmigiano and stir gently to incorporate. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve sprinkled with more grated Parmigiano.



To find a bonus recipe for parsnip and carrot pickles with chiles, go to FineCooking.com/extras.

lamb stew with parsnips, prunes, and chickpeas

North African in spirit, this hearty sweet and savory stew is perfect for the season. Serve it with couscous or good crusty bread.

Serves 4 to 6

FOR THE LAMB

- 3 lb. boneless leg of lamb, cut into 1-inch cubes
 - Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 medium carrots, cut into 3-inch pieces
- 1 medium yellow onion, peeled and stuck with 1 whole clove
- 1 3-inch cinnamon stick
- 1 bay leaf

FOR THE STEW

- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter or olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, cut into small dice Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 medium cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 Tbs. paprika
- 2 tsp. cumin seed, toasted and ground
- 2 tsp. coriander seed, toasted and ground
- ½ tsp. cayenne

2 cups cooked chickpeas, rinsed if canned

- 18 pitted prunes, halved
- 14 cup tomato purée
- 1 lb. medium parsnips, peeled, cored (see Test Kitchen, p. 99), and cut into 2-inch pieces
- Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro or flat-leaf parsley

PREPARE THE LAMB

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

Season the lamb with 2 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. In a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, combine the lamb, carrots, onion, cinnamon, bay leaf, and enough water to cover. Cover and braise in the oven until the meat is very tender, about 2½ hours. Strain the mixture through a fine sieve over a large bowl. Discard the vegetables and spices. (The recipe may be prepared to this point up to 2 days ahead. Cool the lamb and broth, and refrigerate separately. Skim the fat from the broth before continuing)

MAKE THE STEW

In a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, heat the butter or oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, a pinch of salt, and a few grinds of pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and lightly browned, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic, paprika, cumin, coriander, and cayenne and cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant (don't let the garlic burn), 1 to 2 minutes.

Stir in the chickpeas, prunes, tomato purée, and a pinch of salt. Add the reserved lamb and 4 cups of the broth and bring to a boil. Boil for 5 minutes and then turn the heat to low. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the parsnips and cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and serve sprinkled with cilantro or parsley.

Head chef at Chez Panisse, David Tanis is the author of A Platter of Figs and Other Recipes. □

Shop & Store

Grown in cold climates, parsnips are usually harvested in the fall and, like carrots, stored in cool root cellars. However, frost will convert their starches to sugar, concentrating their sweet flavor, so many home gardeners and small growers keep their parsnips in the ground and dig them as needed through winter and early spring. That's why you're likely to find the sweetest parsnips at a farmstand or farmers' market.

While there are several varieties of parsnips, most markets don't usually indicate which they're selling, mainly because the differences in flavor, texture, and appearance are minimal. Your best bet is to choose what looks freshest. Here are some tips:

SHOP Parsnips should be firm and of uniform color; blemishes can be a sign of decay. Opt for medium parsnips, as very large ones can be woody and bitter.

STORE Wrap unwashed parsnips in paper towels or newspaper and store them in a loosely closed plastic bag in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for up to two weeks.













pork tamales with double-chile sauce

There are different styles of tamales throughout Latin America, but their essential components-masa, a filling, and a wrapperare the same. Wrapped in corn husks and served with a smoky chile sauce, these are traditionally Mexican.

Yields 24 to 30 medium tamales

FOR THE PORK FILLING

- 2 to 3 Tbs. lard or vegetable oil
- 3- to 31/2-lb. boneless pork shoulder or Boston butt, cut into 3-inch chunks and trimmed
- 1 medium white onion, roughly chopped
- medium cloves garlic, lightly smashed and peeled
- 4 dried bay leaves, toasted (see p. 103)
- 2 to 3 sprigs fresh thyme, marjoram, or mild oregano, or 1 Tbs. dried Mexican oregano
- 2 to 3 whole cloves
- 1 to 2 guajillo, New Mexico, ancho, chipotle, or other dried red chiles, toasted (see p. 103), stemmed, and seeded
- 11/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. whole black peppercorns
- 1 tsp. whole allspice berries

FOR THE CHILE SAUCE

- 2 Tbs. lard or vegetable oil
- medium white onion, roughly chopped (about 2 cups)
- medium heads garlic, peeled (about 35 cloves)
- ancho chiles, toasted (see p. 103), stemmed, seeded, soaked in very hot water for 15 minutes, and drained
- guajillo chiles, toasted (see p. 103), stemmed, seeded, soaked in very hot water for 15 minutes, and drained
- 2 cups canned, puréed fire-roasted or regular tomatoes
- 2 cups (approximately) reserved pork cooking broth or lower-salt chicken broth
- Tbs. tamale-grind masa harina
- Tbs. brown sugar or honey; more as needed
- tsp. cumin seed, toasted (see p. 103) and ground
- tsp. dried Mexican oregano, toasted (optional; see p. 103)
- 1/2 tsp. ground allspice
- tsp. ground cloves Kosher salt
- 1 2- to 3-inch cinnamon stick

FOR THE MASA

- 3½ cups tamale-grind masa harina
- 12 oz. (11/2 cups) lard, unsalted butter, vegetable shortening, or a combination, softened
 - Kosher salt
- 2 to 21/2 cups reserved pork cooking broth
- 40 dried corn husks

MAKE THE PORK FILLING

Heat the lard or oil in a heavy-duty 8-quart pot over medium-high heat. Working in batches, cook the pork until well browned, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer each batch to a bowl after browning.

Return all of the pork to the pot and add the remaining pork filling ingredients and enough water to cover. Bring to a boil, cover, and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook until the meat is fall-apart tender, 1 to 1½ hours. Remove the meat from the pot, cool briefly, and shred it using 2 forks 1. Strain the broth, discarding the solids, and let cool briefly. Skim off the excess fat and reserve the broth. (The recipe may be made to this point up to 2 days ahead; refrigerate the meat and broth separately.)

MAKE THE CHILE SAUCE

Heat 1½ Tbs. of the lard or oil in a 4-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer the onion and garlic to a blender.

Add the soaked chiles, tomatoes, and a little of the broth to the blender and purée until smooth.







Heat the remaining 1/2 Tbs. lard or oil in the saucepan over medium-high heat, add the masa harina, and cook for about 1 minute. Add the chile-tomato mixture and cook, stirring regularly, until it has darkened in color, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the sugar or honey, cumin, oregano (if using), allspice, cloves, 21/2 tsp. salt, and enough pork broth to thin the purée to a sauce consistency 2. Add the cinnamon stick, lower the heat, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the color deepens slightly, the consistency is smooth, and a light sheen develops on the surface of the sauce, an additional 15 to 20 minutes, adding more broth as needed. Season to taste with salt and sugar. (The sauce may be made up to 2 days ahead; keep refrigerated.)

MAKE THE MASA

In a large bowl, mix the masa harina with 2½ cups hot (140°F to 160°F) water 3. Cover and let sit at room temperature for at least 30 minutes or refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Using a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or a hand mixer), whip the lard, butter, or shortening on medium-high speed until fluffy, 1 to 2 minutes. Add 1 tsp. salt and continue beating while adding the masa in golf-ball-size pieces, waiting a few seconds between each addition. When about half of the masa is mixed in, start alternating the masa with the pork broth until all of the masa is used, along with about 2 cups of the broth. Add ¼ cup of the chile sauce and whip until light and fluffy 4, adding more broth if the mixture seems too dry.

To test if the masa is ready, take a small piece (about ½ tsp.) and drop it in a cup of cold water. It should easily float. If not, simply whip the masa for a few more minutes and test again. Often, adding a bit more of the pork broth or cool water during this second mixing will help; don't add too much liquid, however, or you'll end up with overly soft masa and shapeless tamales.

ASSEMBLE THE TAMALES

Soak the corn husks in very hot water for 30 to 45 minutes, or overnight in cool water with a plate or bowl set on top of the husks to keep them submerged. You'll have enough husks to make the tamales, plus extra to line the steamer and make up for any broken husks.

In a medium bowl, mix 2 cups of the chile sauce with the shredded meat and season to taste with salt.

Wipe a soaked husk dry and put it smooth side up on a work surface. If necessary, trim the bottom with scissors so the husk can lie mostly flat. Put about ½ cup masa in the center of the widest portion of the husk. With a spoon or spatula, spread it evenly over one-half to two-thirds of the husk leaving a ½-inch border at each edge 5.

Put 2 to 3 Tbs. of the pork filling in the center of the masa about ½ inch from the wide end 6.

Masa 101

Masa is a simple dough made from corn kernels that have been dried, rehydrated, and nixtamalized, or treated with lime (calcium oxide) to remove their skins. Once the skins are rubbed off, the kernels are thoroughly washed and ground into soft, pliable masa. Fresh masa is very perishable and therefore difficult to find outside Mexico and its bordering states, so it's often dried and powdered to make masa harina (harina means flour;

see The Tamales Pantry, page 76). Masa harina can then be reconstituted into masa dough by mixing it with hot water, as in photo 3, opposite.

In tamale making, masa is usually **beaten or whipped** with fat (preferably lard), seasonings, and liquids (like broth), resulting in a soft, fluffy texture, as in photo 4, above.







The tamales can be steamed as they are, or tied to make them more secure or to dress them up. To make ties, rip long, thin strips off one or two corn husks . Then place a strip of corn husk under the tamale, wrap it around the middle (making sure that you have some of the tail underneath) and tie securely.



STEAM THE TAMALES

Fill a deep 8-quart pot with a pasta insert with enough water to reach just below the insert. Without the insert in place, cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Have ready a kettle or pot of almost boiling water to add if the water









gets low. Arrange the tamales upright (open end up) in the insert, leaving room for the steam to circulate. Fit the insert into the pot over the boiling water 2. Use the extra husks to cover the tamales (this helps concentrate the heat). Cover the pot with a lid. Steam for 1 to 1½ hours, adjusting the heat as needed to keep the water just boiling. Check the water level frequently and add more as needed to keep the pot from going dry.

To test for doneness, quickly remove a tamale and replace the lid on the pot to continue the cooking. Put the tamale on the counter for a few minutes and then carefully unwrap it. If ready, the masa should be set and will pull away from the wrapper easily.

Let the tamales rest for 5 to 10 minutes before serving to allow the masa to firm up. For softer tamales, let them rest in the pot with the heat off and the lid and extra leaves removed. For firmer tamales, let them rest out of the pot, covered with a cloth.

Serve the tamales in their wrappers with extra sauce passed on the side, and have diners unwrap them just before eating. Once unwrapped, they cool quickly.

Daniel Hoyer is a cooking teacher, food writer, and culinary tour guide in Mexico and Southeast Asia. His book Tamales was published in 2008.



Get a menu for a tamale-making party at Finecooking.com/extras.









Cake fancy

Three impossibly delicious cakes (and the secrets to their good looks).

BY REBECCA RATHER

IN TEXAS we like things big. So as a born-and-bred Texan, I can't resist big cakes. I say, if you're going to make (and eat) cake, make it tall, really tall, and big in flavor—like the beauties here. And don't stop there, not when you can decorate them with white chocolate leaves, homemade marshmallows, and an eye-catching spiked and torched meringue. Just hope your guests

have Texas-size appetites.



outrageous coconut-cream meringue cake

This cake owes its stunning looks to a billowy meringue frosting that's spiked and browned all over with a kitchen torch (for more on torches, see Test Kitchen, p. 99).

Serves 16

FOR THE CAKE

- 8 oz. (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened; more for the pans
- 13½ oz. (3 cups) unbleached all-purpose
 - 4 tsp. baking powder
 - ½ tsp. kosher salt
 - 1 cup unsweetened coconut milk, well shaken and at room temperature
 - 1 Tbs. pure vanilla extract
 - 2 cups granulated sugar
 - 2 large eggs, at room temperature
 - 3/3 cup sour cream, at room temperature
 - 6 large egg whites, at room temperature

FOR THE FILLING

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 3 large egg yolks
- 34 cup granulated sugar
- 2 Tbs. unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sweetened coconut flakes, toasted
- 1 oz. (2 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 Tbs. pure vanilla extract Pinch kosher salt

FOR THE MERINGUE

- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 11/2 cups egg whites (about 10 large), preferably pasteurized, at room temperature

MAKE THE CAKE

Position racks in the bottom and top thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. **Butter three** 9x2-inch round cake pans and line each with a parchment round. Butter the parchment.

In a medium bowl, mix the flour, baking powder, and salt. In a 1-cup liquid measure, mix the coconut milk with the vanilla. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and sugar on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 5 minutes. Scrape down the bowl. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition.

Add about one-third of the flour mixture and mix on low speed until incorporated. Add half of the coconut milk and mix until incorporated. Continue adding the flour mixture and coconut milk, alternating the two and ending with the flour. Add the sour cream and mix until incorporated. Pour the batter into a large bowl.

In a clean mixer bowl and using the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites on high speed until soft peaks form, 2 to 3 minutes. Using a spatula, gently stir a large spoonful of the whites into the batter to loosen it, and then fold the remaining egg whites gently into the batter.

Divide the cake batter evenly among the prepared cake pans. Level the batter with a spatula. Set two pans on the top rack and the third on the lower rack. Stagger the pans on the oven racks so that no pan is directly over another. Bake, swapping and rotating the pans' positions after 15 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center of each cake comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes total. Cool on racks for 10 minutes. Invert the cakes onto the racks, remove the parchment, and cool completely.

MAKE THE FILLING

In a medium bowl, whisk 1½ cups of the cream and the egg yolks.

Combine the sugar and flour in a medium saucepan. Add the cream mixture and cook, whisking, over medium heat until smooth, 2 minutes. Bring to a simmer and cook, whisking, until thickened to a pudding consistency, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in the coconut, butter, vanilla, and salt and let cool to room temperature.

With an electric hand mixer, whip the remaining ½ cup cream to soft peaks. With a spatula, gently fold the whipped cream into the filling.

ASSEMBLE THE CAKE

Put a cake layer on a flat serving platter or a cake stand lined with strips of waxed paper to keep it clean while icing. Top the layer with half of the filling, spreading it evenly with an offset spatula almost to the cake's edge. Repeat with a second cake layer and the remaining filling. Top with the last cake layer.

MAKE THE MERINGUE

Put the sugar and egg whites in the

metal bowl of a stand mixer (make sure it's clean) and set over a pot of simmering water. Whisk constantly until the sugar melts completely, 3 to 4 minutes. Rub a small amount between your fingers to make sure all of the sugar grains have melted. Transfer the bowl to the mixer, fitted with the whisk attachment, and whisk at low speed until the mixture becomes completely opaque and begins to thicken, about 4 minutes. Raise the speed to medium and beat until thickened to soft peaks that barely hold their shape and flop over when the beater is lifted, 5 to 7 minutes. Finally, raise the speed to high and beat until glossy and thickened to medium-firm peaks that stand up stiffly but curl slightly at the tip when the beater is lifted, about 4 minutes more.

Using an offset spatula, apply the meringue thickly over the entire cake-don't worry about spreading it smoothly or you'll overwork the meringue (you may not need all of it). Then, repeatedly poke your fingertips into the meringue, pulling it into spikes all over the cake. Remove the waxed paper strips.

Using a kitchen torch, brown the meringue by holding the torch 2 to 3 inches from the meringue and waving the flame over the cake until it's browned all over.

Make ahead: You can bake, cool, wrap, and store the cake layers at room temperature for up to 1 day or freeze for up to 1 month. You can refrigerate the assembled cake (without the meringue topping) for up to 4 hours before decorating it. Wait to make the meringue until you're ready to finish the cake.



Get a bonus recipe for Pear-Ginger Cake with Rum-Caramel Glaze at Fine Cooking.com/extras.





white chocolate macadamia cake with raspberries and white chocolate buttercream

White chocolate leaves (surely, it's time to bring them back) and a sleek coat of buttercream give this three-layer stunner a dressed-up look.

Serves 16

FOR THE CAKE

- 12 oz. (1½ cups) unsalted butter, softened; more for the pans
- 14 oz. (3½ cups) cake flour
- 11/2 tsp. baking powder
- 34 tsp. baking soda
- 34 tsp. kosher salt
- 21/3 cups granulated sugar
- 2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1½ cups buttermilk, at room temperature
- 6½ oz. white chocolate, chopped (1½ cups)
 - 4 oz. (1 cup) chopped toasted macadamia nuts

FOR THE WHITE CHOCOLATE LEAVES

- 9 to 12 organic lemon leaves, preferably different sizes
- 6 oz. white chocolate, coarsely chopped (1¼ cups)

FOR THE BUTTERCREAM

- 4 large eggs
- 4 large egg yolks
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1½ lb. (3 cups) unsalted butter, softened
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 8 oz. white chocolate, melted and cooled to room temperature

FOR THE FILLING

- 2 cups raspberry jam
- 2 cups (8 oz.) fresh raspberries

FOR THE DECORATION (optional)

- 14 to 1/3 cup fresh raspberries
- 3 to 6 small sprigs fresh mint

MAKE THE CAKE

Butter the parchment.

Position racks in the bottom and top thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. **Butter three** 9x2-inch round cake pans and line each with a parchment round.

Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a medium bowl.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 5 minutes. Scrape down the bowl. Add the

vanilla and then the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition.

Add about one-third of the flour mixture and mix on low speed until incorporated. Add half of the buttermilk and mix until incorporated. Continue adding the flour mixture and the buttermilk, alternating between the two and ending with the flour. The batter will be thick and glossy. Fold in the white chocolate and macadamia nuts. Divide the cake batter evenly among the prepared cake pans. Level the batter with a spatula. Set two pans on the top rack and the third on the lower rack. Stagger the pans on the oven racks so that no pan is directly over another. Bake, swapping and rotating the pans' positions after 15 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center of each cake comes out clean, 28 to 35 minutes total. Cool on racks for 10 minutes. Invert the cakes onto the racks, remove the parchment, and cool completely.

MAKE THE WHITE CHOCOLATE LEAVES

Wash the leaves and dry them with paper towels. Line two rimmed baking sheets with parchment.

Put the white chocolate in a metal bowl over a saucepan of barely simmering water and whisk until melted and smooth.

Using a small pastry brush, paint a thick coat of chocolate on the underside of each leaf. Don't let chocolate drip over the sides of the leaves, or they will be difficult to peel off later.

Place the leaves chocolate side up on the prepared baking sheet and leave in a cool, dry place or refrigerate until the chocolate has set

Hold the leaf stem and peel the leaf carefully away from the chocolate. Transfer the chocolate leaves to the other prepared baking sheet and refrigerate until ready to use.

MAKE THE BUTTERCREAM

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip the eggs and egg yolks on high speed until thick and lightened, about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, clip a candy thermometer to a 3-quart saucepan; don't let the tip touch the bottom of the pan. Combine the sugar with ½ cup water in the pan and simmer over medium heat until it reaches 234°F to 235°F. Transfer the sugar mixture to a

heatproof measuring cup. With the mixer running on low speed, pour the sugar mixture down the side of the bowl into the egg mixture in a slow, thin stream. Increase the speed to medium and beat until the mixture has cooled (the bowl should be barely warm to the touch), 6 to 8 minutes. Add the butter 4 Tbs. at a time, beating on medium speed until incorporated, about 20 seconds for each addition. (Don't worry if the mixture looks thin at first; it'll thicken as you add more butter.) After all the butter has been added, add the salt, raise the speed to medium high, and beat until thick and glossy, about 1 minute. Fold the white chocolate into the buttercream.

ASSEMBLE THE CAKE

Put a cake layer on a flat serving platter or a cake stand lined with strips of waxed paper to keep it clean while icing. Top the layer with 1 cup of the jam, spreading it evenly with an offset spatula to the cake's edge. Scatter 1 cup of the raspberries evenly over the jam. Repeat with a second cake layer, the remaining 1 cup jam, and the remaining 1 cup raspberries. Top with the last cake layer.

Put 2 cups of the buttercream in a small bowl. With an offset spatula, spread this buttercream in a thin layer over the top and sides of the cake. Refrigerate the cake until the buttercream firms enough to seal in the crumbs. 20 to 30 minutes.

Spread the remaining buttercream in a thick, smooth layer over the entire cake. Remove the waxed paper strips.

Decorate with the white chocolate

leaves, fresh raspberries, and mint leaves, if using. Before serving, let sit at room temperature until the chocolate leaves soften slightly, about 30 minutes.

Make ahead: You can bake, cool, wrap, and store the cake layers at room temperature for up to 1 day or freeze for up to 1 month. The white chocolate leaves will keep in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. You can refrigerate the frosted cake (without the decorations) for up to 4 hours. Return to room temperature before decorating.



To see a video on making chocolate leaves and spiking and torching meringue, go to Fine Cooking.com/extras.

COVER RECIPE

hot chocolate layer cake with homemade marshmallows

All the rich flavor of hot chocolate-in cake form. Homemade marshmallows piled on top seal the deal.

Serves 16

FOR THE CAKE

- 6 oz. (% cup) unsalted butter; more for the pans
- 13½ oz. (3 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for the pans
 - 34 cup canola oil
- 41/2 oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 21/4 oz. (3/4 cup) natural unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 34 cup buttermilk, at room temperature
- 2 Tbs. pure vanilla extract
- 21/2 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. kosher salt

FOR THE FROSTING

- 21/2 cups heavy cream
- 3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter
- vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds scraped out
- 6 oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 6 oz. (2 cups) natural unsweetened cocoa powder; more for decorating
- ½ cup Lyle's Golden Syrup
- 14 tsp. kosher salt

FOR THE MARSHMALLOWS

- 3 1/4-oz. envelopes unflavored powdered gelatin
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup

and knock out the excess.

- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup plus 2 Tbs. confectioners' sugar; more as needed

MAKE THE CAKE

Position racks in the bottom and top thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Butter three 9x2-inch round cake pans and line each with a parchment round. Butter the parchment, then dust with flour

In a 3-quart saucepan, combine the butter, oil, chopped chocolate, and 1 cup water. Heat over medium heat until melted.

In a large bowl, whisk the flour, sugar, and cocoa powder. Pour the hot chocolate mixture into the sugar mixture and whisk until combined.

Whisk in the eggs, one at a time, then whisk in the buttermilk, vanilla, baking soda, and salt. Divide the batter evenly among the prepared pans.

Set two pans on the top rack and the third on the lower rack. Stagger the pans on the oven racks so that no pan is directly over another. Bake, swapping and rotating the pans' positions after 20 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center of each cake comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Cool on racks for 10 minutes. Invert the cakes onto the racks, remove the parchment, and cool completely.

MAKE THE FROSTING

In a 4-quart saucepan over low heat, combine the cream, butter, and vanilla bean and seeds and stir until the butter is melted. Remove the vanilla bean and whisk in the chopped chocolate until melted. Whisk in the sugar, cocoa powder, syrup, and salt until smooth—be sure the cocoa powder dissolves completely. Pour into a 9x13-inch pan and freeze until firm. about 2 hours, or refrigerate overnight.

MAKE THE MARSHMALLOWS

Pour ¾ cup cold water into the bowl of a stand mixer. Sprinkle the gelatin over the water. Attach the bowl to the mixer and fit it with the whisk attachment.

Clip a candy thermometer to a 3-quart saucepan; don't let the tip of the thermometer touch the bottom of the pan. In the saucepan, boil the sugar, corn syrup, salt, and ¾ cup water over medium heat without stirring until it reaches 234°F to 235°F, about 10 minutes. With the mixer on low speed, pour the hot sugar mixture into the gelatin in a slow, thin stream.

Add the vanilla, carefully increase the speed to high, and beat until the mixture has thickened and cooled, about 5 minutes (the bottom of the bowl should be just warm to the touch). Line a 9x13-inch pan with foil, leaving an overhang on 2 sides. Sift 1 Tbs. of the confectioners' sugar into the bottom of the pan, then pour the marshmallow mixture into the pan and sift another 1 Tbs. confectioners' sugar on top. Let sit at room temperature until set, at least 2 hours.

ASSEMBLE THE CAKE

Remove the frosting from the freezer or refrigerator. Transfer to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and beat on medium speed for 2 minutes

to soften. Change to a whisk attachment and beat at medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes.

Put a cake layer on a flat serving platter or a cake stand lined with strips of waxed paper to keep it clean while icing. Top the layer with 11/2 cups of the frosting, spreading it evenly with an offset spatula to the cake's edge. Repeat with another cake layer and 1½ cups frosting. Top with the last cake layer.

Put 1½ cups of the frosting in a small bowl. With an offset spatula, spread this frosting in a thin layer over the top and sides of the cake. Refrigerate the cake until the frosting firms enough to seal in the crumbs, 20 to 30 minutes.

Spread the remaining frosting in a smooth layer over the top and sides of the cake. If necessary, you can rewhip the remaining frosting to loosen and lighten it. Remove the waxed paper strips.

Use the foil overhang to lift the marshmallow from the pan. Using a knife that has been dipped in cold water, cut along the edge of the marshmallow to release it from the foil. Transfer to a cutting board and remove the foil. Put the remaining 1 cup confectioners' sugar in a medium bowl. Cut the marshmallow into cubes of different sizes, from 1/4 to 3/4 inch (you will need to continue to dip the knife in cold water as you cut the marshmallows). The marshmallows will be very sticky-dip the cut edges in the confectioners' sugar to make them easier to handle. As you work, toss a few cubes at a time in the sugar to coat, then shake in a strainer to remove the excess. Mound the marshmallows on top of the cake (you'll need only a third to half of them). Sift some cocoa powder over the marshmallows.

Make ahead: You can bake, cool, wrap, and store the cake layers at room temperature for up to 1 day or freeze for up to 1 month. You can refrigerate the frosting for up to 3 days. The assembled cake can be refrigerated for up to 4 hours (return to room temperature before serving). Wrapped well, leftover marshmallows keep at room temperature for up to 1 month.

Rebecca Rather is the author of the award-winning Pastry Queen cookbook series and the owner of Rather Sweet Bakery in Fredericksburg, in the Texas Hill Country.







Making melt-in-your-mouth chocolate fudge is simple: You boil sugar, heavy cream, and chocolate, let the mixture cool, and then beat it to the right consistency. As the mixture boils, the sugar crystals dissolve, and the sugar concentration gradually increases. Then, once beating starts,

the sugar begins to recrystallize. If the crystals stay small, the result is a smooth fudge. But if larger crystals form, the fudge will be grainy. Because large crystals can form at any time during fudge making, you need to be vigilant. Here's what to do every step of the way for perfect results.



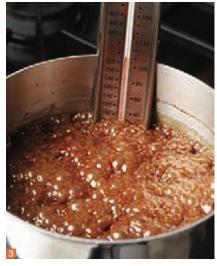
Use corn syrup and butter

Both interfere with sugar crystallization, so adding them to the fudge prevents the crystals from growing too large. Butter should be added only after the boiling is done (see photo 4). If added before boiling, it coats the crystals and keeps them from dissolving, resulting in grainy fudge.



Clean the pan sides

It's important to keep the boiling mixture from coming in contact with sugar crystals on the sides of the pan; otherwise, the sugar will start to recrystallize too soon, causing large crystals to form. To prevent this, cover the pot with a lid for two minutes after it starts boiling-the steam will wash the crystals down the sides.



Bring it to the right temperature

Boiling the mixture to 236°F to 238°F (known as the soft-ball stage) results in the correct concentration of sugar, so the fudge sets up to the proper firmness after beating. Fudge boiled below this temperature is too soft to hold its shape, and fudge boiled above this point becomes too firm.



Don't stir the fudge

Shaking or stirring the fudge mixture while it's boiling or cooling causes premature crystal growth. If the crystals form too early, they continue to grow and become too large.



Let it cool

Start beating the fudge only when it has cooled down to 110°F. It will be glossy and dark brown. If it's hotter the crystals will form too fast and the fudge will be grainy. If the fudge is too cool it will set up and be difficult to beat.



Know when to stop beating

Beat the fudge vigorously to form many small crystals and create a smooth texture; stop beating when it turns a lighter brown and becomes more opaque, and when the ripples made by the beaters hold their shape long enough to briefly expose the bottom of the pan.





creamy chocolate fudge

Yields twenty-five 11/2-inch pieces

- 3 Tbs. cold unsalted butter; more at room temperature for buttering the thermometer and pan
- 3¾ cups granulated sugar
- 1½ cups heavy cream
- 4 oz. unsweetened chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 3 Tbs. light corn syrup
- 1 tsp. table salt

Lightly butter the face of a candy thermometer and set aside.

Put the sugar, cream, chocolate, corn syrup, and salt in a large (4-quart) heavy-duty saucepan and stir with a spoon or heatproof spatula until the ingredients are moistened and combined. Stirring gently and constantly, bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat, 7 to 12 minutes. Cover the saucepan and let the steam clean the sides of the pan for 2 minutes.

Clip the candy thermometer to the pot, being careful not to let the tip of the thermometer touch the bottom of the pot, or you might get a false reading. Let the mixture boil without stirring until it reaches 236°F to 238°F, 2 to 5 minutes. Take the pan off the heat and add the butter, but do not stir it into the mixture. Set the pan on a rack in a cool part of the kitchen. Don't disturb the pan in any way until the mixture has cooled to 110°F, 1 to 1½ hours.

Meanwhile, line the bottom and sides of an 8x8-inch baking pan with foil, leaving a 2-inch overhang on two opposite sides of the pan. Butter the foil. Set the pan aside.

Remove the thermometer from the fudge mixture. Using a hand mixer, beat the mixture on high speed until it is a few shades lighter in color and thickens enough that the beaters form trails that briefly expose the bottom of the pan as they pass through, 10 to 20 minutes. Pour the thickened fudge into the prepared pan, using a rubber spatula to help nudge it out of the pot. You can scrape the bottom of the pot but not the sides; any crystals that stick to the pot stay in the pot. Smooth the top of the fudge with the spatula. Set the pan on a rack and let the fudge cool completely, about 2 hours. The fudge will be slightly soft the day it's made but will firm up overnight.

Turn the fudge out onto a clean cutting board and peel off the foil. Turn the slab of fudge right side up and cut it into 25 equal pieces.

The fudge will keep for a week to 10 days stored in an airtight container at room temperature.



CooksClub members can get a step-by-step video of making fudge at FineCooking.com/extras.

Fudge It

Give your homemade fudge a flavor twist.



PEPPERMINT-CHOCOLATE FUDGE After beating the fudge, stir in ½ cup crushed peppermint candy. Sprinkle ¼ cup crushed candy over the fudge after smoothing the top.



ROCKY ROAD FUDGE
After beating the fudge, stir in 2 cups mini marshmallows and 1½ cups toasted slivered almonds.



CHOCOLATE-COCONUT FUDGE
After beating the fudge, stir in 2½ cups toasted sweetened coconut flakes.
Sprinkle ½ cup of the coconut over the fudge after smoothing the top.



MOCHA-CHOCOLATE FUDGE
Add 2 Tbs. instant espresso or coffee to the chocolate-cream mixture and cook as directed in the recipe. After beating the fudge, stir in ½ cup cocoa nibs. If you like, after smoothing the top, lightly score the fudge into 25 pieces and place a coffee bean in the center of each piece.







chocolate-covered sandwich cookies with dulce de leche (alfajores)

Andy Corson, Sandy Hook, Connecticut

My wife is from Argentina, and the first time I traveled there with her, I fell in love with alfajores—delicate shortbread cookies with a gooey dulce de leche filling and a coating of dark chocolate. Several years—and many cookies—later, I was finally able to recreate them at home, just the way they tasted in Argentina. They've been our holiday go-to cookie ever since.

Yields about twenty-eight 2-inch sandwich cookies

- 9 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for rolling
- 9 oz. (2 cups) whole-wheat flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. table salt
- 8 oz. (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened
- 34 cup granulated sugar
- 1½ tsp. finely grated orange zest
- 2 13.4 oz. cans Nestlé dulce de leche (see Test Kitchen, p. 99)
- 1 lb. bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 1 pint heavy cream

MAKE THE COOKIES

In a medium mixing bowl, whisk the flours, baking powder, and salt. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the orange zest. Scrape down the bowl and paddle with a rubber spatula.

With the mixer on low, gradually add the flour mixture to the butter mixture. After adding the last of the flour but before it's fully incorporated, add ¼ to ¼ cup cold water and mix just until a smooth dough forms, 1 to 2 minutes. Divide the dough into two equal pieces, form into disks, and wrap in plastic. Chill overnight.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line 2 cookie sheets with parchment. Roll out the cold dough on a lightly floured surface until it's 1/6 to 3/6 inch thick. With a 2-inch plain or fluted round cookie cutter, cut the dough in circles—you can gather and reroll the scraps once. Bake one sheet at a time until the edges are very lightly browned and the cookies puff up slightly, 8 to 10 minutes. Cool the cookies on a rack and store in an airtight container for up to

3 days or freeze for up to 1 month, until you're ready to fill and coat them.

FILL THE COOKIES

Lay out the cookies, flat side down. Put a heaping ½ Tbs. of dulce de leche on half of the cookies. Cover each with a top cookie, flat side up.

COAT THE COOKIES

Put the chocolate in a small, deep, heatproof bowl. In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the cream just to a boil. Pour over the chocolate and let sit for 10 minutes. Stir the mixture very gently, incorporating the cream steadily and without overworking, until glossy and completely mixed.

Line 2 cookie sheets or rimmed baking sheets with parchment. Pick up a sandwich cookie with a small offset spatula. Immerse in the chocolate mixture, flipping the cookie to coat completely. Pick up with the spatula and tap a couple of times on the side of the bowl to get rid of excess chocolate. With another spatula in the opposite hand, gently smooth out the top of the cookie and then run the spatula along the bottom. Transfer to the parchment-lined sheet. Repeat with the remaining cookies. Allow the coating to set at room

temperature for a few hours and then serve. Store in a plastic container, separating each cookie with parchment or waxed paper, in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks or freeze for up to 3 months.



coconut chocolate almond biscotti

Beth Kujawski, Crown Point, Indiana

I was thinking about my favorite candy bar, Almond Joy, and wondering if I could add those flavors—the almond, chocolate, and coconut combination—to biscotti. It worked! Now, these cookies are a holiday favorite in my family.

Yields about 25 biscotti

- 10% oz. (2 % cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 11/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. table salt
- 4 oz. (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, softened
- 34 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup firmly packed sweetened shredded coconut
- 1 cup chopped toasted almonds
- 1 cup semisweet mini chocolate chips

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, and salt. In a stand mixer fitted with

the paddle attachment, beat the butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, mixing on medium speed after each addition until incorporated. Mix in the vanilla and then the coconut until well combined.

With the mixer on low speed, gradually add the flour mixture and mix just until combined. The dough will be sticky. With the mixer still on low, mix in the almonds and chocolate chips. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line a large cookie sheet with parchment. Divide the dough into equal halves and place on the cookie sheet. Working on the sheet, shape each half into a

loaf about 10 inches long, 3 inches wide, and ¾ inch high. Bake until the tops are browned, cracked, and crusty, and spring back slightly when gently pressed, 30 to 35 minutes.

Cool about 30 minutes on the cookie sheet. Reduce the oven temperature to 325°F.

Transfer each loaf to a cutting board and with a sharp serrated bread knife, cut ½-inch slices crosswise on the diagonal. When slicing, hold the sides of the loaf near each cut to keep the slices neat. Put the slices cut side down on the cookie sheet and bake until the biscotti are dried and the cut surfaces are lightly browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer the cookie sheet to a rack and let the biscotti cool completely. The biscotti may give slightly when pressed but will harden as they cool.



Enter this year's holiday cookie contest at FineCooking.com.





I wanted to capture the flavor of gingersnaps in a cookie that I could roll out and cut into festive shapes. Every Christmas, I make these with my niece and nephew, who love to cut them into snowflakes. After we bake them, I fill a couple of pastry bags with the icing and let the kids go to town.

Yields about 24 cookies

FOR THE COOKIES

- 13½ oz. (3 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for rolling
 - 2 tsp. ground ginger
- 11/2 tsp. baking powder
- 34 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. table salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
- 3/4 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup unsulfured molasses
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

FOR THE DECORATION

- ½ lb. (2 cups plus 2 Tbs.) confectioners' sugar
- 2½ Tbs. meringue powder Blue food coloring Edible silver dragées

MAKE THE COOKIES

In a large bowl, whisk the flour, ginger, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves; set aside. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the sugar and butter on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Beat in the molasses, egg, and vanilla until thoroughly combined,

about 1 minute. On low speed, gradually add the flour mixture until just combined.

Divide the dough in half, shape into two balls, and wrap each in plastic. Refrigerate for at least 2 and up to 8 hours.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Line 2 cookie sheets with parchment.

Working with one piece of dough at a time, roll it on a lightly floured piece of parchment until it's about ½ inch thick. Put the parchment and dough onto another cookie sheet and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Cut out cookies with a 5-inch snowflake cookie cutter. Remove excess dough from around the cutouts and transfer them with a spatula to the prepared sheets, spacing them about 2 inches apart. You can gather and reroll the scraps up to 2 times.

Bake one sheet at a time until the cookies begin to darken around the edges, 6 to 8 minutes.

Cool on the sheet on a rack for about 15 minutes. Transfer the cookies directly to the rack and cool completely.

DECORATE THE COOKIES

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, mix the confectioners' sugar, meringue powder, and ¼ cup cold water on low speed until blended. Increase the speed to medium and beat until the icing holds thick, soft peaks, 3 to 4 minutes. Test the icing's consistency

by piping a small amount through a piping bag fitted with a straight #2 tip. If it's too thick, add a few drops of water to the mixture in the bowl. If the icing seems too runny, add confectioners' sugar, a tablespoon at a time, beating on low speed to blend. Don't overbeat, or the icing will stiffen and lose its gloss. Keep the icing covered with a damp cloth or plastic wrap until ready to use, and use the icing the same day it's made.

Put about three-quarters of the icing in a clean 1-quart container. Put the remaining icing in a small container and tint with the blue food coloring. (Stir in coloring a bit at a time until the desired shade is reached.)

Put a small amount of the white icing in a piping bag fitted with a straight #2 tip and pipe the outline of the cookie.

Stir water, a few drops at a time, into the remaining white icing until the icing no longer stays peaked when piped but creates a smooth surface. To test, put a small amount in another piping bag with a #2 tip (the icing will drip, so have a cloth ready). Fill in the lines on each cookie, allow the icing to spread, and be careful not to overfill—use a small paint-brush to help spread the icing if necessary. Let the cookies air dry until the icing is set; 2 to 3 hours.

When the white icing is completely dry, put the blue icing in a clean piping bag fitted with a #2 tip and pipe branched lines connecting opposite tips of the snowflakes. Decorate with dragées while the blue icing is wet.

Kimberly Y. Masibay is a Fine Cooking *contributing editor.* □

For sources, see Where to Buy It





A kiss from the heart of Italy!

In the heart of Italy's majestic region of Umbria, the historic home of St. Valentine, a young Perugina chocolatier was inspired to create Baci – Italian for kiss. For nearly 100 years, passion for the Baci tradition remains unchanged. Silky dark chocolate envelops a heart of gianduia, sprinkled with chopped hazelnuts and crowned with a whole hazelnut. Each kiss is hugged by a love note and wrapped in Baci's iconic silver and blue foil.

Available at fine stores everywhere. www.perugina.com





TEST KITCHEN

Tips/Techniques/Equipment/Ingredients/Glossary







INGREDIENT

Piquillo Peppers

Sweet and succulent with smoky, tangy notes, piquillo peppers come from the village of Lodosa in the Navarra region of northern Spain. Named for their distinctive beak-like shape (piquillo means "little beak" in Spanish), these bright red peppers are handpicked in the fall, fire-roasted, and peeled. Some are even roasted right in the field after being harvested. You'll find them in jars or tins packed in olive oil or their own rich juices. Look for the D.O. (Denominación de Origen) distinction on the label to be sure they're the real deal.

Traditionally, piquillos are stuffed with either seafood or meat, but their uses extend far beyond. Swap them in wherever you would use regular roasted red peppers for a deeper, more intense flavor. Try them slivered on a salad or layered onto a sandwich. They can be blended for pasta sauce or chopped and used as a delicious and dressy relish like the one that garnishes the Cauliflower Soup on page 54. We also like them straight out of the jar with a chunk of crusty bread and a sprinkle of salt.

You might find piquillos at a well-stocked grocery store, but they're generally more of a specialty store item. For a mail-order source, see page 112.

-Samantha Seneviratne

TECHNIQUE

Salt crusting

THERE'S AN UNUSUAL BUT SIMPLE TECHNIQUE behind the beef rib roast on page 50: A salt crust that flavors the meat and keeps it juicy during roasting. It's such a cool cooking method that we couldn't pass up the chance to show you what it looks like in action.



Kosher salt, flour, egg white, spices, and herbs are ready for mixing into a smooth dough.



After chilling, the dough is malleable and easy to roll into a rectangle large enough to completely cover the roast.



The dough gets draped over the seared roast. If the dough tears during draping, you can patch it back together by pressing the tears together and using excess dough from one area to cover any bare patches in another. Try to cover the meat completely.



During roasting, the dough hardens into a shell. Break away any edges tucked under the roast or stuck to the rack until the shell is loose enough to lift off in one piece, revealing the beautiful meat underneath.

—Jennifer Armentrout



How to make a lemon twist

A LEMON TWIST is more than just a pretty cocktail garnish; the aromatic oils in the lemon peel add flavor to the drink, too. There are different ways to make a lemon twist, some more complicated than others. This method strikes a nice balance between simplicity and visual appeal:

Using a vegetable peeler, peel the zest from a lemon in 1x4-inch strips, avoiding as much of the white pith as possible. Trim the edges of each strip neatly, and then cut in half lengthwise. Holding a skewer over the cocktail glass, wrap a strip of zest around the skewer and then slide it off into the glass. The twist will uncoil slightly but should hold a loose corkscrew shape in the drink.

—Melissa Pellegrino





EQUIPMENT

Kitchen torch

To make the Outrageous Coconut-Cream

Meringue Cake on page 82, you'll need a kitchen torch to brown the meringue topping. If you don't have one of these butane-fueled mini blowtorches, put it on your Christmas wish list—at \$25 to \$35, it's an inexpensive addition to your kitchen arsenal, and once you own one, you'll find all sorts of excuses to fire it up. You can't make a decent crème brûlée at home without one, and it's great for charring small chiles, melting and browning cheese, or browning crumb toppings on casseroles.

We have several torches in the test kitchen, but the one we always reach for is the BonJour Chef's Torch. It's easy to use and has an adjustable flame. Plus, unlike some models, this torch has a switch that allows it to stay lit without holding down the ignition button. To buy it, see page 112. — J.A.



TIP

Cake success

Whether you're making one of the cakes from the story on page 80 or another favorite recipe, there are several steps you can take to guarantee the best results. Culled from years of testing cake recipes, these are our best tips for great cakes.

Don't use cold ingredients Butter, eggs and other dairy ingredients will blend better if they're not refrigerator-cold. Unless your recipe specifically calls for cold ingredients, let them sit at room temperature until they've warmed or softened a bit. Don't let your butter get too warm, though-the ideal temperature is around 65°F, just shy of room temperature.

Cream thoroughly Three to five minutes of beating butter and sugar together may seem excessive when they appear combined much sooner, but proper creaming is key to a light cake. A lengthy creaming time ensures that enough air bubbles are created to lift the cake. If you're using a hand mixer, add an extra minute to your creaming time.



Start slowly To keep dry ingredients from flying out of the bowl as you mix them into wet ingredients, run the mixer on low speed at first just until moistened and then ramp it up to the speed recommended in the recipe. Scrape often Even if the recipe doesn't say to do so, stop the mixer and scrape down the bowl and beater whenever it looks like your batter is blending unevenly.



Use a scale Not only is a scale great for measuring your ingredients, it also makes dividing batter between cake pans faster and easier. Start by weighing your mixing bowl. When your batter is ready, weigh it in the bowl, subtract the bowl's weight, and divide by the number of pans you have to fill. Then simply weigh that amount of batter into each pan-no messing around with measuring and scraping cups of batter into each pan.

Make sure your tools are clean When beating egg whites for a meringue or foam cake, make sure your bowl and whisk are spotless. Even a trace of fat on your equipment can slow down foaming and decrease the overall

Use straight-sided cake pans Some cake pans are made with slightly slanted sidesnot ideal for layered cakes. Before you begin, make sure your cake pans are straight-sided (see the comparison below) so your finished cake will stack neatly. If you need to purchase some straight-sided pans, we recommend Parrish Magic Line pans (see page 112 for a mail-order source). -J.A. and S.S.





Dulce de leche

A FAVORITE in Latin American countries, dulce de leche (sweet milk) is a thick, luscious, creamy dessert. Made by caramelizing sweetened condensed milk, it's a delicious ice cream topping or filling for cakes or cookies, like the Chocolate-Covered Sandwich Cookies on page 95.

Before this treat became so popular, ready-made dulce de leche was hard to come by, so people made their own. The traditional method involves simmering a can of condensed milk for several hours until it has thickened and caramelized to a rich amber hue. However, this method is risky, since built-up pressure can cause the can to explode. So we tested a couple of other cooking methods. In the end, we found that a double-boiler produces a great dulce de leche. It's also faster than the in-can method, and you can see what's happening as the milk cooks. If you want to make your own filling for the cookies, start with three 14-ounce cans of condensed milk. Here's how:

Fill the base pan of a double boiler (or a medium saucepan) halfway with water. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to medium for an active simmer. Pour the condensed milk into the double boiler's top insert (or into a stainless-steel bowl that fits snugly on top of the saucepan) and set it uncovered over the simmering water. Every 30 minutes, check the water level in the pan, replenishing as needed, and give the milk a stir. Remove from the heat once the milk has caramelized and thickened, 2½ to 3 hours.



Adobo

The Spanish word **adobo** means "marinade" or "seasoning," but depending on what part of the world you're in, the style of seasoning can vary greatly. In Cuba and Puerto Rico, adobo is a seasoned salt or spice mix, whereas in Mexico, it's more likely to mean a spicy tomato-based sauce, like the kind used to marinate chipotle chiles in a can of chipotles en adobo. The recipe for Chicken Adobo on page 108 is based on the Filipino style of adobo, which involves stewing meat, usually pork or chicken,

in a flavorful mixture of soy sauce, vinegar, garlic, bay leaves, and black peppercorns. When Spanish colonists arrived in the Philippines in the 16th century, they were introduced to this indigenous style of cooking, which they called adobo. The name stuck, and to this day, adobo—with its Filipino/Malayan roots and Spanish name—is considered a national dish of the Philippines. $-J\!.A.$

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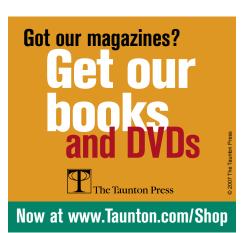
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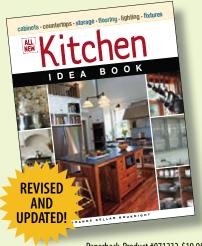






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Cooking with duck and goose fat

A NICE LITTLE BONUS came out of testing the recipes for roasted duck and goose on pages 61 and 62: lots of rendered duck and goose fat. We were happy to have it because it's a tasty alternative to oil and butter. Stored in the freezer, it'll last for up to a year. Because the duck fat from the recipe in this issue is subtly flavored with tangerine zest and five-spice powder, it's best used in Asian or North African styles of cooking, like stir-fries or tagines. The goose fat is plain and therefore more versatile. Here are some of our favorite ways to use it (these ideas will work with unflavored duck fat, too, if you happen to have some):

Roasted potatoes Toss baby red potato wedges with 1 Tbs. fat, salt, and pepper. Roast in a hot oven until tender, and then sprinkle with fresh thyme.

Sautéed baby carrots and cipollini onions Sauté peeled baby carrots and cipollini onions in 1 Tbs. fat with a little honey and a pinch of cayenne until tender and browned.

Fennel confit Poach wedges of fennel in enough fat to cover until meltingly tender; serve alongside steak or lamb chops.

Sole meunière Dredge four sole fillets in flour. Pan-sear in 2 Tbs. fat until golden-brown on both sides and cooked through. Sprinkle with lemon juice and parsley.

Warm vinaigrette Warm 3 Tbs. fat and gradually whisk it into 1 Tbs. red wine vinegar and ¼ tsp. Dijon mustard. Add chopped shallots and tarragon. Toss with spinach or frisée.

Chive and goose fat biscuits Substitute cold fat for the butter in your favorite biscuit recipe and add chopped chives with the liquid ingredients.

—S.S. and M.P.





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- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium head cauliflower (11/4 lb.), cored and cut into 1-inch florets (about 7 cups)
- 1 medium red onion, finely diced
- 2 Tbs. honey
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 1/2 tsp. sweet smoked paprika
- 14 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp. finely grated lemon zest
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro

Heat 3 Tbs. of the oil in a heavy duty 12-inch skillet (preferably cast iron) over mediumhigh heat. Add the cauliflower and ½ tsp. salt and stir to coat. Cook, without stirring, until the cauliflower is browned on one side, about 4 minutes. Turn each piece over and cook. without stirring, until evenly browned on the second side, about 4 minutes more. Reduce the heat to medium and continue cooking, stirring often, until browned all over, about 4 minutes longer.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, stir 2 Tbs. water and the remaining 1 Tbs. oil with the onion, honey, coriander, paprika, and pepper flakes. Add the onion mixture to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is softened, about 1 minute. Continue cooking, stirring constantly, until most of the liquid has evaporated and the cauliflower is glazed, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a serving bowl, stir in the lemon juice and zest, and garnish with the cilantro. Serve immediately.

—Lori Longbotham

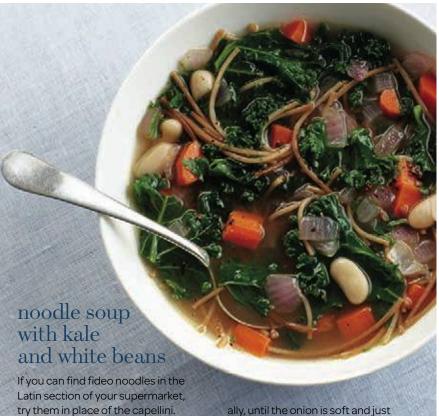
veal), Safaya Tork (sweet potato salad,

Photographs by Scott Phillips; food styling by Samantha Seneviratne (adobo,



Make It Tonight

Just 30 minutes to dinner, start to finish.



try them in place of the capellini.

Serves 6 to 8

- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 medium red onion, chopped
- cup broken (2- to 3-inch pieces) dried capellini pasta
- 2 quarts lower-salt chicken broth
- small bunch kale, ribs removed, leaves roughly chopped (about 6 cups)
- 1 15-oz. can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 3 Tbs. fresh lime juice; more to taste Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro

Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the carrots and onion and cook, stirring occasiongolden-brown, about 10 minutes. With a rubber spatula, scrape the vegetables into a medium bowl and set aside. If necessary, wipe the pot clean.

Heat the remaining 1 Tbs. oil in the pot over medium-high heat. Add the pasta and cook, stirring often, until dark golden-brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the broth and stir, scraping the bottom of the pot to release any stuck-on pasta. Add the carrots and onions, kale, beans, lime juice, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer until the kale, carrots, and pasta are tender, 8 to 10 minutes.

Remove the pot from the heat, stir in the cilantro and season to taste with lime juice, salt, and pepper before serving.

-Liz Pearson



quick veal cacciatore

If you like, substitute chicken cutlets for the veal.

Serves 4

- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 4 4-oz. veal cutlets, pounded ¼ inch thick Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 8 oz. sliced cremini mushrooms (3½ cups)
- 1 cup canned diced tomatoes with juices
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 11/2 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary

Put the flour in a wide shallow bowl. Season the cutlets all over with 1 tsp. salt and 1 tsp. pepper. Dredge in the flour and shake off any excess.

Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over mediumhigh heat until shimmering hot. Working in batches if necessary, cook the cutlets until dark golden-brown, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a large plate as they finish.

In the same skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 3 minutes.

Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until they release their liquid and it reduces to a glaze, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes, wine, and rosemary. Bring back to a simmer, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the skillet. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer until the sauce is thickened, about 7 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Add the cutlets and any accumulated juices to the sauce and cook until heated through, 1 to 2 minutes. Serve immediately.

-Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough

orecchiette with brussels sprouts, gorgonzola, and brown-butter pecans

For a sweet, nutty flavor, roast the Brussels sprouts until they're just this side of charred.

Serves 4 to 6

Kosher salt

- 20 oz. Brussels sprouts, trimmed (4 cups)
- 3½ Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil Freshly ground black pepper
 - 1 lb. dried orecchiette
- 1½ Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped pecans
- 2 large shallots, minced (% cup)
- 34 cup heavy cream
- 4 oz. Gorgonzola, crumbled (1 cup)
- 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven, set a heavy rimmed baking sheet on the rack, and heat the oven to 500°F. Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat.

In a food processor fitted with the medium (4 mm) slicing disk, slice the Brussels sprouts. Transfer them to a large bowl, drizzle with the oil, sprinkle with 1¼ tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper, and toss until well coated. Remove the hot baking

sheet from the oven and spread the Brussels sprouts on it in a single layer. Roast, stirring once about halfway through the cooking time, until the Brussels sprouts are tender and flecked with charred bits, 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the orecchiette according to package directions until just al dente.

In a medium heavy-duty skillet, melt ½ Tbs. of the butter over medium heat. Add the pecans and cook, stirring frequently, until the butter is deeply browned and the pecans are toasted, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate and set aside.

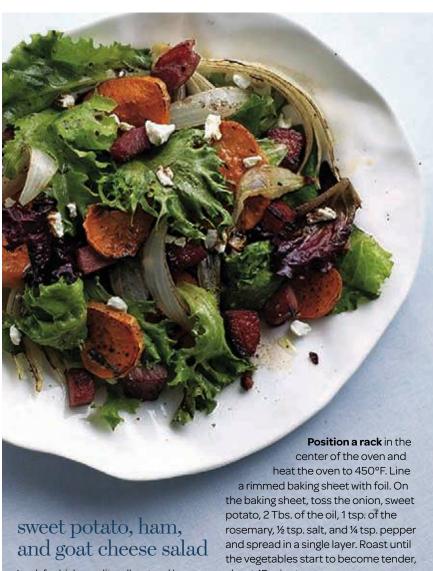
Melt the remaining 1 Tbs. butter in the skillet over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the cream and bring to a simmer. Off the heat, add 3 oz. (¾ cup) of the Gorgonzola and stir until melted.

Drain the orecchiette and return it to the pot. Add the Brussels sprouts, Gorgonzola sauce, and lemon juice and toss well. Serve, sprinkled with the pecans and the remaining Gorgonzola.

—Dawn Yanagihara







Look for high-quality, all-natural ham steak for the best flavor and texture. Serves 4

- 1 medium yellow onion, halved lengthwise and cut into 1/2-inch
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch rounds
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 11/4 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3/4 lb. ham steak (preferably "ham with natural juices"), cut into 34-inch cubes (2 cups)
- 2 Tbs. pure maple syrup
- 2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
- oz. mesclun salad mix
- 4 oz. fresh goat cheese, crumbled

about 15 minutes.

In a small bowl, toss the ham with the maple syrup. Push the vegetables on the baking sheet aside to make room for the ham and bake until the ham and onions are browned in places, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk the remaining 6 Tbs. oil with the vinegar, the remaining 1/4 tsp. rosemary, and 14 tsp. each salt and pepper. In a large bowl, toss the mesclun with 14 cup of the vinaigrette. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Divide the mesclun among 4 plates. Top with the roasted vegetables and ham. Sprinkle each salad with some of the goat cheese. Drizzle with the remaining vinaigrette and serve.

-Tony Rosenfeld

chicken adobo with rice

Based on traditional Filipino chicken adobo, or chicken stewed in vinegar (see Test Kitchen, p. 99, for more information), this is a perfect weeknight dish, as most of the ingredients come from the pantry. Serve with a fresh green salad.

Serves 4

- 11/2 cups long-grain white rice Kosher salt
- 1 Tbs. vegetable oil
- 11/2 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into 1-inch strips Freshly ground pepper
- 4 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1/2 cup lower-sodium soy sauce
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 1 tsp. freshly cracked black peppercorns

Put the rice, a big pinch of salt, and 3 cups of water in a 3-quart saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook until the water is absorbed and the rice is tender, about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside with the cover on. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a heavy-duty 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken, season with 14 tsp. each salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until light golden-

brown, 4 to 6 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, 2 more minutes. Add the vinegar, soy sauce, bay leaf, and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer until the liquid reduces by about onequarter, 8 to 10 minutes. Discard the bay leaf. Just before serving, uncover the rice and fluff it with a fork. Serve the chicken and sauce over the rice.

—Adeena Sussman



chopped steak sandwiches

The steak is "chopped" by pulsing it quickly in a food processor into tender little pieces.

Serves 4

- 2 Tbs. ketchup
- 1 Tbs. Dijon mustard
- 1 jarred hot cherry pepper, stemmed, seeded, and chopped
- 1 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 lb. beef sirloin tips (flap meat), cut into 1-inch pieces

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

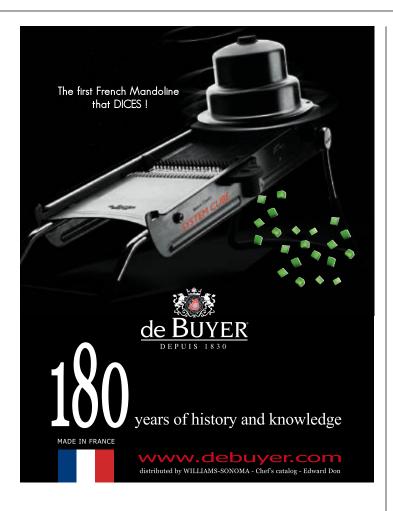
- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- small yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 6 oz. sliced white mushrooms (2 cups)
- 11/2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar
- 4 long rolls, split and lightly toasted
- 1½ oz. baby arugula

Mix the ketchup, mustard, cherry pepper, and vinegar in a small bowl and set aside. **In a food processor**, pulse half of the beef until just coarsely chopped. Transfer to a

bowl. Repeat with the remaining beef. Toss the beef with ½ tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. Heat 1½ Tbs. of the oil in a heavy 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering hot. Add the beef and cook, stirring occasionally, until it loses most of its raw color, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Heat the remaining 1½ Tbs. oil in the pan. Add the onion and ¼ tsp. salt; cook, stirring often, until beginning to soften and brown, about 4 minutes. Add the mushrooms and 1/4 tsp. salt; cook, stirring often, until they soften and begin to release their juice, about 2 minutes. Add the ketchup mixture and beef and any accumulated juices. Cook, stirring often, until heated through, about 2 minutes. Stir in the cheese until melted, about 1 minute more. Split the rolls almost through lengthwise and pile on the steak and arugula. Cut the sandwiches in half, and serve.

-Tony Rosenfeld







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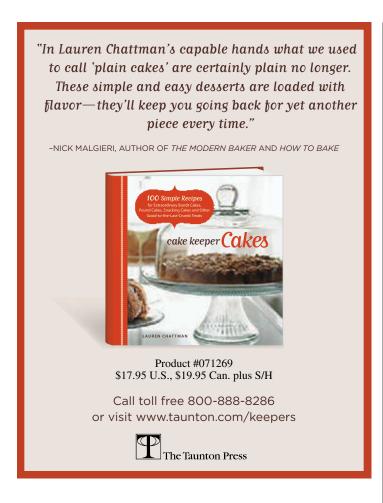


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- Oxo poultry shears, \$24.99, oxo.com, 800-545-4411.
- Large nonstick roaster with V-rack, \$69.95, crateandbarrel.com, 800-967-6696.
- Great White Heirloom serving platter (oval), \$49, potterybarn.com, 888-779-5176
- Apilco beaded hemstitch dinnerware, \$80 for a set of 4 salad plates, williamssonoma.com, 877-812-6235.
- Mercury glass mini ornaments by Roost, \$29 for a set of 9, napastyle.com, 866-776-6272.

From dartagnan.com, 800-327-8246:

- Whole Pekin duck, 5 to 5.5 lb. for \$26.99.
- Whole goose, 12 to 14 lb. for \$184.99, dartagnan.com.

drinks, page 44

- L'original Combier Liqueur d'Orange, \$35 for a 750-ml bottle, drinkupny.com, 800-658-8149.
- Segura Viudas Brut Reserva, \$9.99 for a 750-ml bottle, wine.com, 800-592-5870.
- Warre's Warrior Special Reserve Port, \$17.99 for a 750-ml bottle, thewinebuyer.com, 800-946-3937.
- Platinum ribbed small tumbler by Roost, \$66 for a set of 4, michelevarian.com, 212-343-0033.

good life, page 40

- Corelle Livingware 1014-inch divided plate in Winter Frost White, \$3.99, corelle.com, 800-999-3436.
- Photographed at the Dana-Holcombe House, Newtown, Connecticut, danaholcombehouse .com, 203-426-2000.

fudge, page 88

- Pyrex 8-inch square metal baking pan, \$9.95, cooking .com/fc, 800-663-8810.
- Taylor classic candy thermometer, \$14.99, target.com, 800-591-3869.

test kitchen, page 99

• Fire-roasted piquillo peppers from Lodosa, \$9.95 for an 8-oz. jar, tienda.com, 800-710-4304.

From amazon.com. 800-201-7575:

- Parrish Magic Line 9x2-inch round cake pans, \$8.50.
- BonJour chef's torch with fuel gauge, \$34.95.

preserving, page 22

• Bormioli Rocco Quattro Stagioni home-canning jars, \$3 to \$6, surlatable.com, 800-843-0852.

For more kitchen tools, go to FineCooking.com/buy-it

dressed up, dressed down, page 46

• Thomas Kemper root beer, \$6.99 for six 12-oz. bottles, beymo.com, 925-416-2083.

tamales, page 72

- KitchenAid Pro 500 5-quart bowl-lift stand mixer, \$299.99, shopkitchenaid.com, 800-541-6390.
- Lodge cast-iron round skillet, \$27.95, crateandbarrel.com, 800-967-6696.
- Waring 60th Anniversary blender, \$129.95, williamssonoma.com, 877-812-6235.
- blinQ 8-quart stockpot with pasta insert, \$129.95, cooking.com/fc, 800-663-8810.
- Pewter spoon, \$12; for dealer locations go to woodburypewter.com, or order by phone at 800-648-2014.

From mexgrocer.com, 877-463-9476:

- Maseca corn masa flour for tamales, \$7.50 for a 4.4-lb. bag.
- Corn husks for tamales, \$9.95 for a 16-oz. bag.

From latinmerchant.com, 206-223-9374:

- Guajillo chiles, \$2.50 for a 3.2-oz. packet.
- Ancho chiles, \$2.50 for a 3.2-oz. packet.

IN CHE

wine recommendations

Wine recommendations for "Dressed Up, Dressed Down"; "Duck, Duck, Goose! (and Hens)"; and Menus are courtesy of Patrick Watson at Smith & Vine in Brooklyn, New York. For more great wine ideas, go to smithandvine.com or call 718-243-2864.



repertoire, page 38

 Portable professional electric griddle, \$110, williamssonoma .com, 877-812-6235.

From crateandbarrel.com, 800-967-6696:

- Lodge cast-iron round skillet, \$27.95.
- Reversible stovetop double griddle, \$49.95.

From cooking.com/fc, 800-663-8810:

- Glass mixing bowls, 10-piece set, \$32.95.
- All-Clad butter-warming saucepan, \$49.95.
- Profi Plus balloon whisk, \$9.95.
- Amco stainless-steel measuring cups, \$14.95.
- Pyrex slotted turner, \$8.95.
- Cuisinart baking sheet, \$12.95.

parsnips, page 66

- 9-inch pie pan, \$11.95, cooking .com/fc, 800-663-8810.
- Parsnips courtesy of Wild Carrot Farm, Canton, Connecticut, wildcarrotfarm .com, 860-977-6948.

cookies, page 92

- Meringue powder, \$10.95 for a 10-oz. tub, kingarthurflour .com, 800-827-6836.
- Silver dragées, \$6.95 for 4 oz., kitchenkrafts.com, 800-776-0575.
- Five-inch snowflake cookie cutter, \$2.25, the cookiecutter shop.com, 360-652-3295.



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Recipes	Calories (kcal)	Fat Cal (kcal)	Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat	Mono Fat (g)	Poly Fat (g)	Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)
CHESTNUTS, P. 17											
Chestnut Soup with Crisp Prosciutto	330	80	10	54	10	3	4	1.5	10	290	5
CLEMENTINES, P. 22											
Honey-Preserved Clementines (per ¼ cup)	130	0	0	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
COLD-SMOKED SALMON, P. 24											
Lentil Salad with Fennel and Smoked Salmon	250	120	12	21	14	1	8	4	5	690	8
Smoked Salmon Deviled Eggs	80	60	5	1	7	1.5	2	2.5	110	290	0
Open-Face Smoked Salmon and Avocado Sandwiches	440	190	20	44	21	3.5	14	3	15	1630	7
PANCAKES, P. 38											
Buttermilk Pancakes (per pancake)	110	30	3	16	3.5	1.5	1	0	30	170	0
GOOD LIFE, P. 40											
Sweet and Spicy Roasted Vegetables	200	70	3	35	7	1	5	1	0	340	8
Brown Rice with Walnuts and Golden Raisins	220	110	3	25	12	1.5	6	4.5	0	140	2
Coriander-Crusted Pork Tenderloin	180	80	22	2	9	2.5	5	0.5	55	370	1
DRINKS, P. 44					-						
Sparkling Sidecar	220	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bourbon Hot Toddy	290	0	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sweet Ruby	130	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DRESSED UP/DRESSED DOWN, P. 46											
Herb-and-Salt-Crusted Rib Roast with Morel Sauce	760	440	62	8	50	24	18	2.5	220	200	1
Morel Sauce (per ¼ cup)	260	190	3	8	21	13	6	1	75	80	1
Cauliflower Soup with Almond and Pepper Relish	140	110	3	7	12	4.5	5	1.5	15	460	3
Rainbow Chard with Lemon, Fennel, and Parmigiano	150	100	5	13	11	2	7	1.5	0	530	5
Crushed Potato and Watercress Cakes	270	190	4	17	22	8	10	1.5	35	170	2
Chocolate Soufflés with Rum Whipped Cream	300	150	7	32	16	10	5	1.5	130	80	2
	470		48	1	30	7	17	2.5	115	260	0
Rib-Eye Steaks Marinated with Fennel and Rosemary		260									
Iceberg Wedges with Blue Cheese Buttermilk Dressing	270	210	11	6	23	10	6	6	40	700	1
Broccolini with Olives and Capers	140	100	4	9	11	1.5	8	1	0	420	1
Twice-Baked Potatoes with Sour Cream	370	180	8	42	20	12	5	1	45	210	4
Gingerbread Cake with Root Beer-Poached Pears	800	340	6	112	39	11	15	12	115	550	4
HOLIDAY BIRDS, P. 58											
Roasted Cornish Game Hens with Cranberry-Port Sauce	490	290	36	9	32	10	14	6	210	960	1
Roasted Goose with Prune Stuffing and Wine Gravy	940	530	68	28	59	18	27	7	235	780	3
Roasted Ducks with Tangerine-Hoisin Glaze	820	590	44	9	66	22	30	9	190	1070	1
PARSNIPS, P. 66											
Parsnip Buttermilk Pie	310	100	6	47	11	7	3	0.5	90	300	5
Parsnip and Leek Soup with Cumin and Mustard Seeds	200	70	6	29	8	2.5	4	1	10	140	5
Parsnip Risotto with Pancetta and Sage	590	190	17	81	22	7	11	2.5	25	990	6
Parsnip, Potato, and Scallion Pancakes	140	35	4	23	4	0.5	1.5	1	55	310	4
Mashed Parsnips with Lemon and Herbs	280	110	4	42	12	7	3.5	0	30	740	10
Lamb Stew with Parsnips, Prunes, and Chickpeas	560	140	54	52	16	6	5	2	155	950	12
TAMALES, P. 72											
Pork Tamales with Double-Chile Sauce (per tamale)	270	160	12	16	18	7	8	2.5	40	250	2
CAKES, P. 80											
Outrageous Coconut-Cream Meringue Cake	700	290	9	96	32	21	8	1.5	145	250	1
White Chocolate Macadamia Cake with Raspberries	1180	640	10	130	72	41	22	3	290	290	2
White Chocolate Leaves (per leaf)	70	35	1	9	4	2.5	1.5	0	0	15	0
Hot Chocolate Cake with Homemade Marshmallows	1080	420	14	161	47	23	17	4.5	130	350	8
FUDGE, P. 88											
Creamy Chocolate Fudge (per piece)	190	80	1	30	9	6	2.5	0	25	100	1

Recipes	Calories (kcal)	Fat Cal (kcal)	Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Mono Fat (g)	Poly Fat (g)	Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)
Chocolate-Coconut Fudge (per piece)	230	100	1	34	11	8	2.5	0	25	120	1
Rocky Road Fudge (per piece)	240	110	2	34	12	6	4.5	1	25	105	1
Mocha-Chocolate Fudge (per piece)	210	100	1	31	11	7	3	0	25	100	2
Peppermint-Chocolate Fudge (per piece)	220	80	1	36	9	6	2.5	0	25	105	1
COOKIES, P. 92											
Coconut Chocolate Almond Biscotti (per cookie)	170	80	3	21	8	4	3	1	25	60	1
Chocolate-Covered Sandwich Cookies (per cookie)	370	170	6	45	19	12	5	0.5	50	160	3
Bow Tie Cookies with Apricot (per cookie)	70	35	1	7	4	2.5	1	0	15	15	0
Gingersnap Snowflakes (per cookie)	170	30	2	34	3.5	2	1	0	15	125	0
MAKE IT TONIGHT, P. 106											
Chopped Steak Sandwich	830	330	47	75	37	14	17	3	100	1610	5
Sweet Potato, Ham, and Goat Cheese Salad	520	350	24	19	39	11	23	3.5	60	1460	2
Orecchiette with Brussels Sprouts	670	330	19	67	36	14	15	4.5	70	700	8
Chicken Adobo with Rice	670	150	38	89	17	4	7	4.5	110	1270	1
Honey-Lemon-Glazed Cauliflower	200	120	3	20	14	2	10	1.5	0	190	5
Noodle Soup with Kale and White Beans	200	50	11	29	6	1	3	1	0	230	4
Quick Veal Cacciatore	270	100	26	10	12	3.5	6	1.5	75	480	1

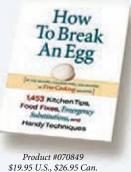
The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used. Optional ingre-

dients with measured amounts are included; ingredients without specific quantities are not. Analyses are per serving; when a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion

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is used. When the quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper per serving for entrées, and ½ tsp. salt and % tsp. pepper per serving for side dishes.

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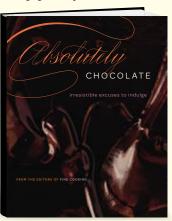
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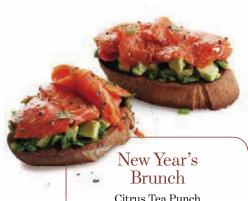
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Citrus Tea Punch finecooking.com

Buttermilk Pancakes page 39

Open-Face Smoked Salmon and Avocado Sandwiches

page 24

Frisée Salad with Oranges and Pistachios

finecooking.com

Coconut Chocolate Almond Biscotti

page 96

To drink: espresso

Modern Steakhouse Supper

Rib-Eye Steaks Marinated with Fennel and Rosemary

page 51

Mashed Parsnips with Lemon and Herbs

page 70

Creamy Spinach finecooking.com

Chocolate Soufflés with Brown Sugar and Rum Whipped Cream

page 56

To drink: an Abbey Dubbel, like Dubbel Trouble from Sixpoint Craft Ales



An Old World Christmas

Chestnut Soup with Crisp Prosciutto page 18

Roasted Goose with Brandied Prune Stuffing and Red Wine Gravy

> Crushed Potato and Watercress Cakes page 54

page 62

Rainbow Chard with Lemon, Fennel, and Parmigiano page 54

White Chocolate Macadamia Cake with Raspberries and White Chocolate Buttercream page 85

To drink: A tart and fruity red like De Forville Langhe Nebbiolo 2007, Barbaresco, Italy





Weeknight Combos

Chopped Steak Sandwiches page 109

Iceberg Wedges with Blue Cheese **Buttermilk Dressing**

page 55

Cauliflower Soup with Marcona Almond and Piquillo Pepper Relish

page 54

Sweet Potato, Ham, and Goat Cheese Salad

page 108

Coriander-Crusted Pork Tenderloin

page 41

Honey-Lemon-Glazed Cauliflower page 106

To drink, two wines for any night: a spicy, earthy red like the Domaine Faillenc Sainte Marie Corbières Rouge 2006, France

a dry white with stone fruit flavors and clean acidity like Peconic Bay Winery Steel Fermented Chardonnay 2007, North Fork, Long Island

Hanukkah Dinner

Red-Wine-Braised Brisket with Cremini, Carrots, and Thyme

finecooking.com

Parsnip, Potato, and Scallion Pancakes

page 69

Steamed Green Beans

Chocolate-Filled Beignets

finecooking.com

To drink: a medium-body dry red like Borgo Reale Sangiovese di Puglia 2004, Puglia, Italy



nendations by Patrick Watson at Smith & Vine, Brooklyn, New York cept bottom left, Christopher Hirsheimer; wine recom



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VEGETARIAN: May contain eggs and dairy ingredients



QUICK: 30 minutes and under



Janet Clarkson

A food history nerd from Down Under shares her obsession in daily blogs. BY LISA WADDLE

Fine Cooking: How did you become an expert on why we eat what we do at holidays and celebrations?

Clarkson: Many years ago, when my children were small, they'd ask, But why can't we have birthday cake (or Christmas pudding or Easter eggs) every day? To silence them, I researched the history behind why certain foods are served on certain days.

FC: Did it work?

Clarkson: Yes, but I couldn't stop, even after my children were grown. In 2005, I set out to write a short food history essay every weekday. To keep myself honest, I emailed the stories to friends and family. Soon, I started getting emails from people I didn't know;

my friends were sending the stories to others. Then a young foodie (my son) nagged me to start a blog.

FC: And now you've blogged about holidays and traditional foods almost every day for the past four years-you must love history. Clarkson: I hated history in school; it completely bored me. But this project took on a life of its own.

FC: So now you and your blog share a name, The Old Foodie. Do you mind?

Clarkson: I just picked the name, not realizing how public this would all become.

FC: Which of your posts has generated the most comments? Clarkson: An early piece on eating dogs got me quite a bit of email abuse; some people took it that I was promoting the eating of man's best friend.

FC: Speaking of controversy, you contributed a chapter to the book Human Cuisine, a collection of essays on cannibalism. How did that come about?

Clarkson: I wrote about using human body parts as medicine, which combined my day job as a medical practitioner with my hobby of food history. History contains some incredibly horrible ideas-human excrement and urine appear in a number of remedies, as does "the thigh bone of a hanged man." The book is actually great fun to read.

FC: From the historian's perspective, how do food trends take off?

Clarkson: Well, anything "new" is always greeted with either apprehension or unbridled enthusiasm. The potato, for example, was introduced to Europe in the 16th century and viewed with great suspicion, partly because the clergy mistrusted any foods not mentioned in the Bible.

FC: Do you cook from these recipes?

Clarkson: Not many. That would require an audience of guests willing to try some strange stuff.

FC: Such as?

Clarkson: Slippery Bob, a recipe for kangaroo brains from the first Australian cookbook, published in 1864.



Name: Janet Clarkson

Age: 61

Job: Health professional by day;

food history blogger by night

Where: Brisbane, Australia

Known for: Her latest book, Menus from

History: Historic Meals and Recipes for

Every Day of the Year

Find out more: theoldfoodie.com



